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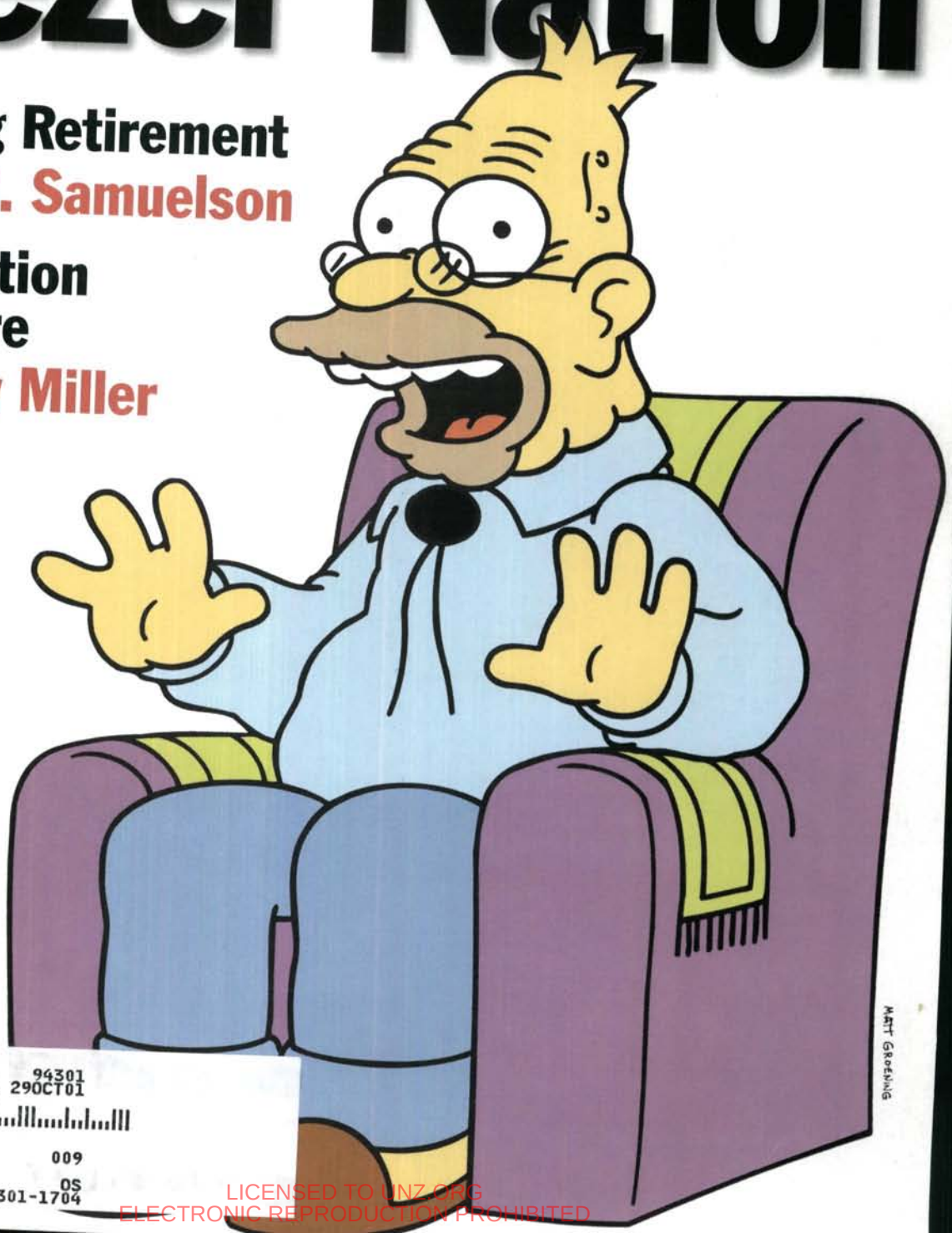

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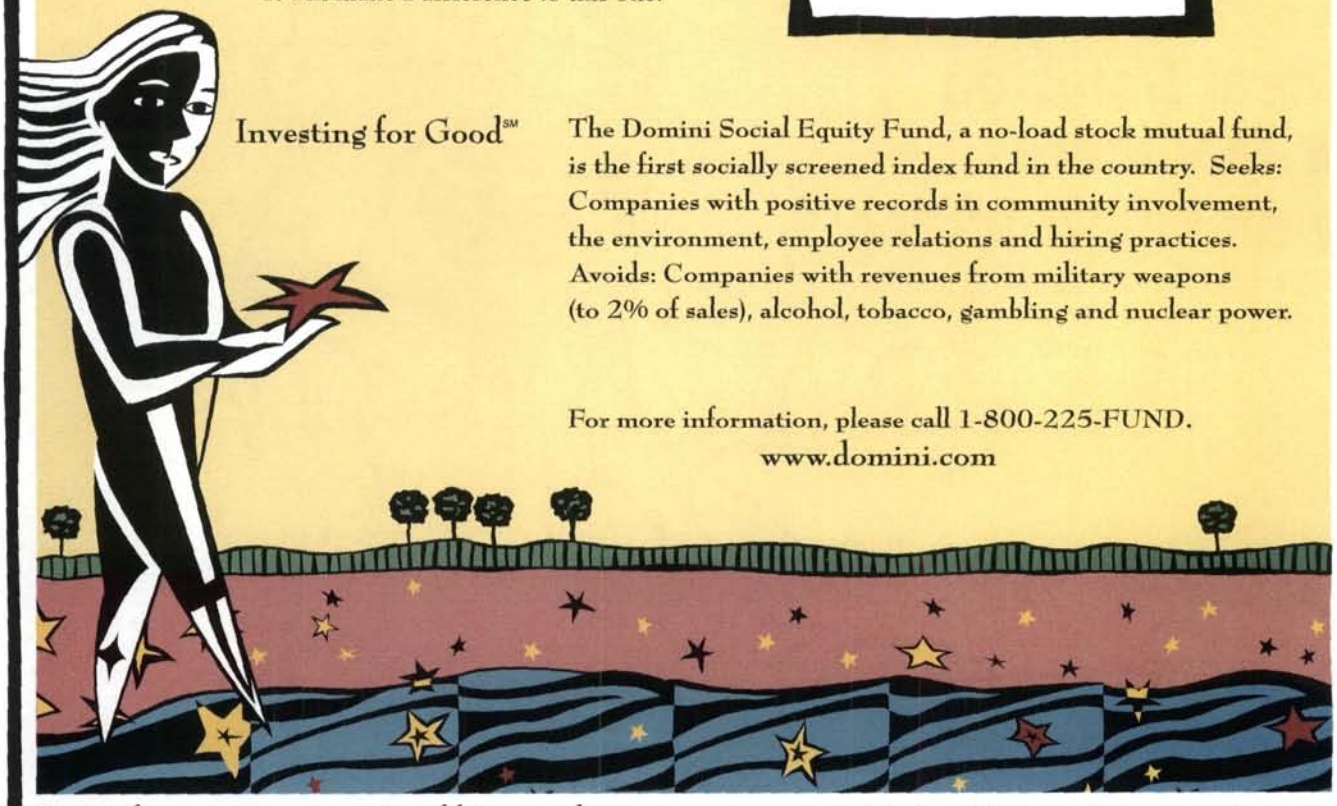

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APRIL 12, 1999

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Strict confidence

To the editors:

Akhil Reed Amar is rightly concerned that the Supreme Court has damaged the presidency by ruling that the president cannot invoke attorney-client privilege to shield his conversations with White House counsel ("The Unimperial Presidency," March 8). But he errs when he claims that the justices have been more protective of their own privacy. According to Amar, "[M]any judges have told their clerks that they owe an absolute duty of confidentiality to the judge under attorney-client privilege." Amar has confused confidentiality with privilege. Confidentiality is an ethical duty, requiring lawyers to refrain from voluntary disclosure or misuse of private information. Judges do indeed expect their clerks to live up to that obligation. The attorney-client privilege is a principle of evidence or procedure, not ethics. It allows one to resist a subpoena or other compelled disclosure of an attorney-client communication. I do not believe that any court has ever held judge-clerk conversations to be immune from discovery in criminal investigations. To my knowledge, no federal judge has ever so much as asked a clerk to refrain from giving testimony before a grand jury.

STEVEN LUBET
Chicago, Illinois

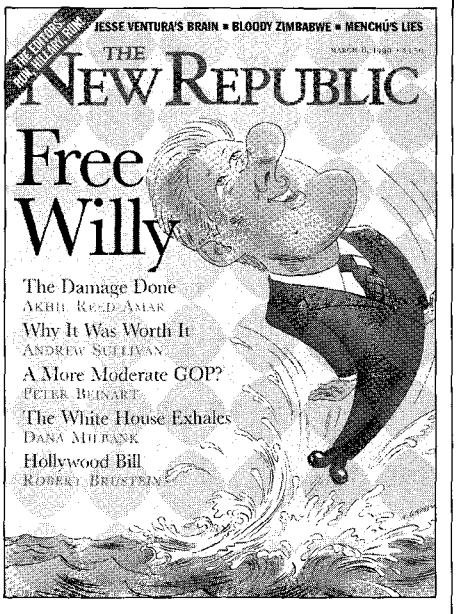
Akhil Reed Amar replies:

Steven Lubet makes a nice distinction between confidentiality and privilege. But I can report from personal conversations with many judges and law clerks that judges often tell clerks that the clerks' work is covered by attorney-client privilege. University of Virginia Law Professor Earl C. Dudley Jr. is far from unique in reporting (in the most recent issue of the *St. John's Law Review*) that he still "recall[s] vividly" the first time he and his fellow clerks met with Chief Justice Earl Warren in the fall of 1967: "He told us that he considered us his lawyers and that our work for him was covered by the attorney-client privilege."

Compromising positions

To the editors:

Andrew Sullivan clutters his perceptive analysis of the impeachment process by scolding the gay establishment for defending Bill Clinton in spite of the president's acceptance of the restrictive "don't ask, don't tell" policy and the Defense of Marriage Act ("A Happy Ending," March 8). What Sullivan omits is that it was Bob Dole and other Republican leaders who conspired to use gay civil rights issues to batter Clinton. "Don't ask, don't tell" was seen in 1993 as a less restrictive compromise forced on the president by Sam Nunn in order to defeat the more virulent anti-gay Dole amendment. Similarly, Dole and Trent Lott contrived the Defense of Marriage Act to make Clinton either abandon his reelection by vetoing it or accept the inevitable congressional disapproval of same-sex marriage. Republicans continue the tactic: last year they tried, but failed, to overturn Clinton's anti-discrimination order that protects gay federal employees, and they insist on blocking a



vote on the ambassadorial nomination of James Hormel, which Sullivan disdainfully dismisses as a "sinecure for [a] fat cat." Just as with time in the military, what is one person's sinecure may be another person's service for country. In either case, anti-gay discrimination is intolerable.

TIMOTHY I. MCFEELEY
Washington, D.C.

Don't, Hillary, don't!

To the editors:

The editorial "Run, Hillary, Run!" suggests superimposing a national female icon on New York voters for the U.S. Senate seat in 2000—not for her abilities, talents, or knowledge of New York's needs and problems but rather to test her viewpoints and posturing as the first lady in the political battlefield of 2000 (March 8).

The state of New York is best served by a senator with a long and extensive legislative background and an intimate and studied knowledge of our issues and problems, as well as an understanding of national issues.

Hillary Clinton has never resided in our state and has never focused on our specific requirements. Most significantly, she lacks legislative experience.

New York now has seasoned and respected officials in the House of Representatives—Nita Lowey, Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler, and Eliot Engel, among others, all of whom are possible viable candidates. Why should New York and its citizens be victimized by a senatorial candidate for the need of THE NEW REPUBLIC editors to test Clinton's pronouncements and policies?

PAULINE MADOW
Riverdale, New York

No equivalence

To the editors:

Charles Lane supports author David Stoll's thesis that the war in Guatemala was a phenomenon of "dual violence," with leftist guerrillas sharing much responsibility for the bloodshed ("Deceiving Is Believing," March 8). But this thesis is undermined by the recent truth commission report, which assigns blame for 93 percent of the political violence to the government and its paramilitary allies, three percent to the guerrillas, and four percent to "other authors." Lane and Stoll would have us view left and right in this conflict as moral equivalents, but the truth commission findings suggest otherwise.

DAVID R. ADLER
New York, New York

To the editors:

Middlebury College anthropologist David Stoll seems to believe—and his reviewer, Charles Lane, clearly is more than happy to reiterate—that the narrow falsehoods which Stoll documents in his recent study of the autobiographical book *I, Rigoberta Menchú* somehow have a bearing on the truth of the much broader record of violence that was inflicted on the indigenous peoples of Guatemala during the last five decades (indeed, the last 500 years).

This is nonsense. Menchú's "self-invention" (to use Lane's phrase) is one thing; the sustained, decades-long violence of the Guatemalan state and its oligarchy against indigenous peoples is something else entirely. Simply put, the falsehoods of the one in no way implicate the truth of the other. To suggest that Guatemalan history has been falsified by its inclusion of reports about the latter is profoundly misleading.

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Lane also describes an "ideological tendency" of Western commentary to focus obsessively on right-wing violence while downplaying or even romanticizing left-wing violence. But very little of the actual violence and repression committed against Guatemala's indigenous peoples and its labor organizers ever received mention in the U.S. media.

Essentially, what David Stoll's book does is take Rigoberta Menchú's individual distortions and use them as a sort of eraser to wipe out the valid history of the period. Stoll projects in its place his own falsehood of the "dual violence" of Guatemala's left and right—as if the actions of both camps, both Guatemala's masses and its elites, were symmetrical. A mere tit for tat. In the end, all that the notion of Guatemala's so-called "self-perpetuating politics of violence" (again, Lane's phrase) does is perpetuate this lie.

DAVID PETERSON
Evergreen Park, Illinois

Kid TV

To the editors:

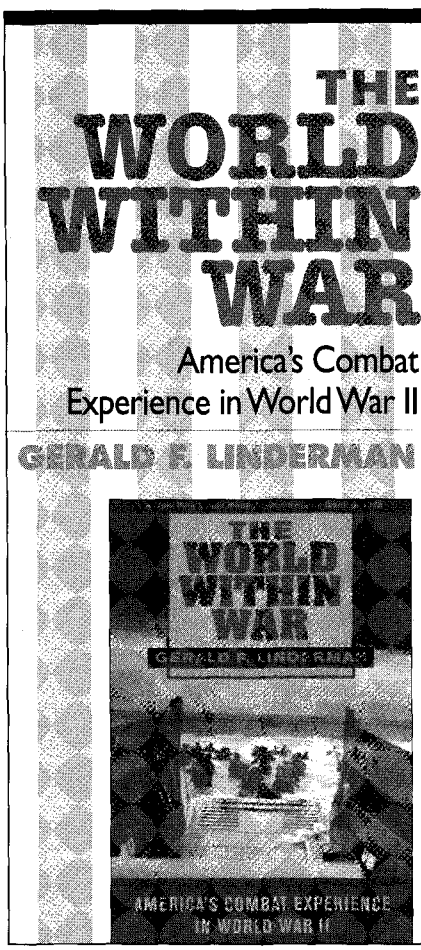
While I applaud Charles Lane for opposing Jerry Falwell's recent attack against "Teletubbies," his argument reveals his own bias about homosexuality ("Tubby Ache," March 8). Despite his claim that he is not "intolerant" of homosexuality, Lane goes on to say he is opposed to any attempt to "sexualize" a TV character in a show intended for very young children. In making this argument, Lane is saying that the only way gay and lesbian people express their identity is through sexual behavior. Has Lane ever heard of love and intimacy? Would Lane feel that a female Teletubby telling a male Teletubby she wants to marry him is a "sexualization" of her character? Of course not. Lane's argument reveals a double standard toward gay and lesbian people that still persists even in these more "tolerant" times—heterosexuality is seen as a complex identity that includes both sexual and nonsexual expression, while being gay is seen as only about sex.

STEVE SOLOMON
Forest Hills, New York

To the editors:

As a mother of three children, of whom the youngest loves to watch "Teletubbies," it seems to me that the message of universal and unconditional love, acceptance, tolerance, and understanding of God have been lost on Jerry Falwell. Of all the people in the world, he is the one who needs to purchase a WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) bracelet.

LEENA ADES
Westport, Connecticut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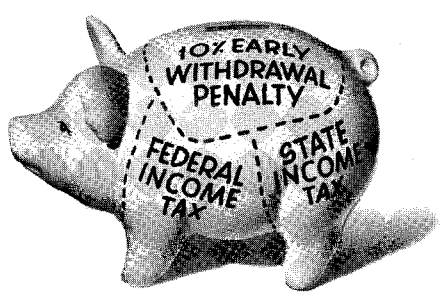

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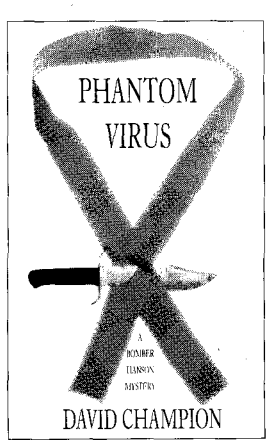

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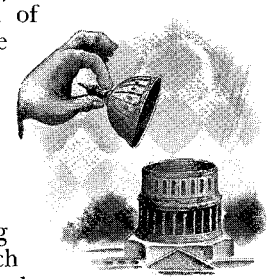
FROM WASHINGTON

No contact

The first casualty of the NATO onslaught against Slobodan Milosevic's Yugoslavia is, or should be, the hardy American faith in "contact" as a foreign policy panacea. I'm referring to the belief, widely held among both ordinary Americans and the cognoscenti of international affairs, that the best way to bring difficult countries and their leaders into consonance with American interests is to have them spend lots of time in the company of Americans—thus fostering mutual understanding, which in turn makes conflict unlikely. Faith in the pacifying powers of "contact" is a main premise of Clinton administration policy toward China, and it is a frequently invoked argument for lifting sanctions against such countries as North Korea, Cuba, and Iran.



Yet, of all the national leaders to emerge from the breakup of Tito's Yugoslavia, none has had more personal contact with America and Americans during his life than Slobodan Milosevic. As a rising star of the Yugoslav Communist Party, Milosevic became a close associate of American diplomat Lawrence Eagleburger, who spent much of his seven years in Belgrade carrying on friendly chitchat with Milosevic. For several years, Milosevic worked as an executive of Serbia's largest bank, a role that required him to spend extended periods in New York. He speaks English well. Indeed, writes former American ambassador to Belgrade Warren Zimmerman, "Many is the U.S. senator or congressman who has reeled out of his office exclaiming, 'Why, he's not nearly as bad as I expected!'... Milosevic knows how to act with Americans. He dresses in the Western style ... drinks Scotch on the rocks, and smokes Italian cigarillos." And, today, he is America's enemy in mortal combat.

Milosevic came to understand us, all right. The problem is that contact with us fostered in him not respect for America but contempt. It seems to have persuaded him that, when the time came, he would know how to handle the Americans—to manipulate us into doing what was in his interest, not ours. And, to a certain degree, he was right. The Dayton peace accord, brokered by Richard Holbrooke in 1995, ended the war in Bosnia that Milosevic had essentially started. But, instead of winding up on trial for war crimes, Milosevic brilliantly positioned himself as the guarantor of peace in Bosnia—the one man who could deliver the cooperation of the Bosnian Serbs. He understood that the Americans' chief interest was not in perfect justice but in ending a horrific war that was also a messy political problem for the U.S. president. Milosevic thus emerged from Dayton with the United States depending on his cooperation and, hence, tacitly endorsing his continued rule in Belgrade.

Power is the career objective Milosevic has pursued his entire life and to which good relations with American diplomats and businessmen were always secondary. Rubbing up against democratic-minded Americans and other Westerners was never remotely enough to loosen the building blocks of Milosevic's mentality. The first of these building blocks was communism, both as an ideology and as a political method. This is a man who was born to a Communist mother, married his die-hard Communist high school sweetheart, and spent his entire life marinating in the political culture of the Yugoslav Communist Party.

The second building block was Serbian nationalism. This came to Milosevic in the final days of the old Yugoslav federation, when he opportunistically perceived that inflaming the passions of the Serbs about their purported ancestral home in Kosovo could impel him to the very top of the party power structure. He stood on the ancient battlefield at Kosovo Polje in 1987 and told a crowd of Serbs, unhappy with the perceived abuses of the province's then-Albanian Communist authorities, "No one should dare to beat you again." It electrified the Serbs and galvanized them behind him.

From that point on, Milosevic initiated war after war—in Croatia, Bosnia, and, now, in Kosovo—for the ostensible purpose of vindicating the rights of Serbs. (Indeed, he has reconciled his nationalism with his communism by claiming that all he ever really wanted was to protect the Serbs by maintaining

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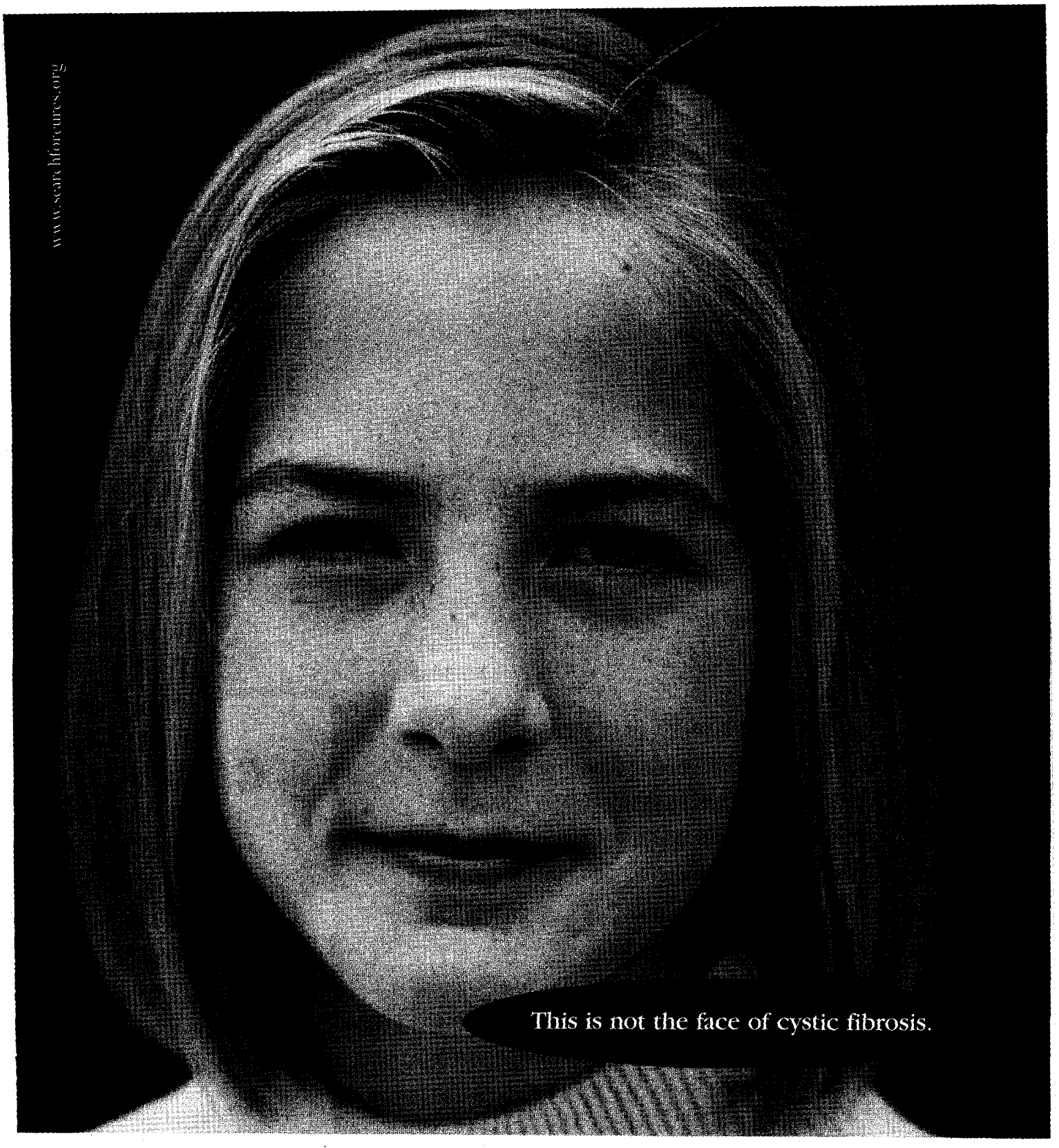

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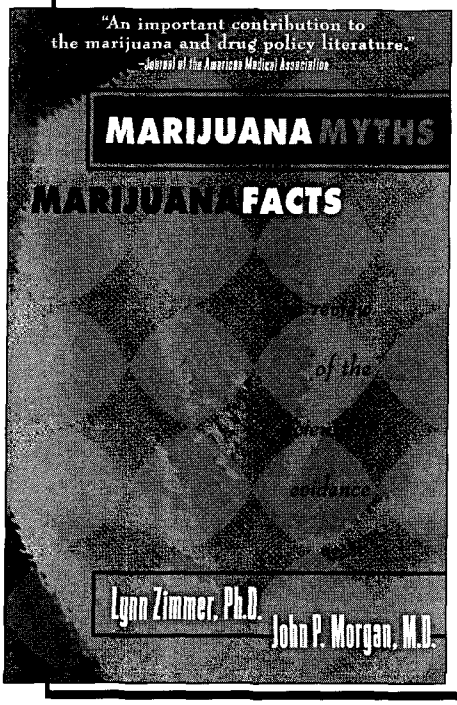
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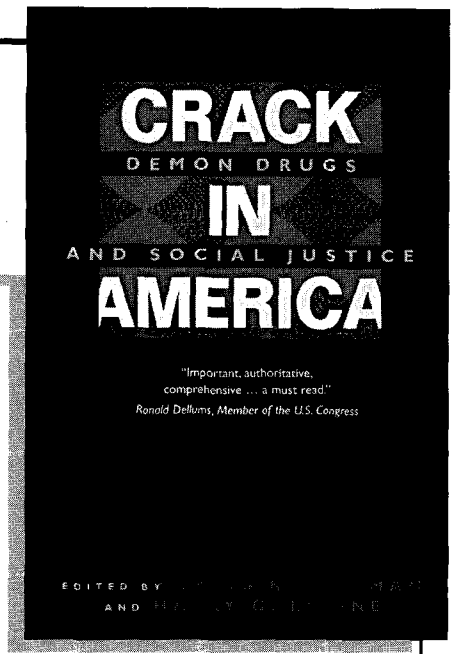

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Edited by CRAIG REINARMAN
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 12, 1999

MEAN BUSINESS

"This is not a slam dunk," President Clinton noted, by way of explaining his decision to start the U.S.-led NATO bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. But, he concluded, "I believe that the position I have taken is the best of a lot of bad alternatives." Indeed. Had the administration not followed through on its threats to punish the Serbs for failing to agree to the peace plan granting Kosovo limited autonomy that was worked out in Rambouillet in March, the consequences would have been dire. Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's forces are engaged in their most violent campaign to date against Kosovo's ethnic Albanians—who make up 90 percent of the province's population. Most recently, the Serbs have destroyed entire villages, forcing an estimated 25,000 ethnic Albanians to flee.

Had NATO not intervened, then, this bloodbath would have been worse. The alliance's credibility would have been dealt a fatal blow, rendering it virtually incapable of preventing even more disastrous regional conflicts in the future. Clinton, in short, had little choice but to order air strikes. This makes the decision of 38 of the Senate's 55 Republicans, led by Majority Leader Trent Lott, to vote against a resolution supporting the use of force all the more irresponsible. It also makes our Russian "friend" Boris Yeltsin's posturing about American "aggression" against his country's old Serbian ally even more disgusting.

The trouble is that the administration's strategy appears to consist entirely of the hope that, after a bit of bombing, Milosevic will blink—and sign the peace plan of Rambouillet. NATO has even scheduled the bombings with daytime pauses to allow Milosevic to cry uncle. This seems to be the signal President Clinton was sending when he identified NATO's three military objectives as *(a)* showing that the alliance's threats aren't idle, *(b)* punishing Serbia for its current offensive, and *(c)* crippling Serbia's overall military capability "*if necessary.*"

But what if Milosevic refuses to follow this script? Unlike territories in Bosnia and Croatia that Milosevic has relinquished in previous peace deals, Kosovo is central to the Serbian national mythology. It is the site of the 1389 battle in which, legend has it, a Serb army perished bravely defending Christian Europe from the Ottoman Turks. Over the past decade, Milosevic has consolidated his power in Belgrade by whipping up Serb feelings about Kosovo; it may be too late for him to unplay this card. "We will not give away Kosovo, not even at the price of bombing," he has said. Milosevic may also be gambling that the spectacle of continuing violence by his forces against the Albanian civilian population, coupled with a few NATO casualties, will sow defeatism in the American camp. He can only be emboldened by the administration's lingering lack of clarity about its war aims. According to *The Washington Post*, when visiting Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema recently asked Clinton what his Plan B was, the president, stumped, looked to his national security adviser, Sandy Berger, for help. Berger replied, haltingly: "We will continue the bombing."

This is not a war for Rambouillet, and it is not a war for Brussels. We are engaged now in a war for the future of Kosovo—and maybe for the future of all of Yugoslavia, to the extent our campaign could topple Milosevic once and for all. So far, though, the administration seems to cling to the chimera of Milosevic as negotiating partner, and it opposes an independent state in Kosovo, mostly out of deference to European fears that this could destabilize the rest of the Balkans.

The administration insists that it has no intention of becoming "the air force of the Kosovo Liberation Army." Yet by now it's too late to pretend that a serious NATO intervention won't tip the balance of military power in favor of the Kosovars—and it's time to prepare for the fact that, risky as it may be, independence for Kosovo is a real possibility and not necessarily a dire one. Indeed, does it make sense for NATO to essentially stage a military invasion of Yugoslavia and then balk at anything more than autonomy for Kosovo out of concern for Yugoslavia's existing borders? When borders no longer make political or moral sense, respect for them ceases to be a principle and becomes a fetish.

Efforts to make bombing a fine-tuned negotiating tool will fail. Openly embracing—or at least preparing for—Kosovo's independence, by contrast, is, as Clinton would put it, "the best of a lot of bad alternatives." At least it has the advantage of maximizing U.S. influence over how the Kosovo Liberation Army will behave if it wins. For example, NATO now is in a strong position to condition any support for the KLA on the Kosovars' refraining from reprisals against Serbs and their observance of basic human rights. The Clinton administration was right to pull the trigger in Yugoslavia. The danger is not that NATO will go too far; it is that NATO will not go far enough. •

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NOTEBOOK

PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC: Edward Said has been on a tour of the Palestinian-ruled territories, spreading his message of rejectionism toward the U.S.-brokered Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Nothing new about that. What did catch our attention, however, were his effusions about American "barbarism." "The American policy tries to annihilate nations that do not follow America's ideology.... American history [and] society is based on the annihilation of nations," Said claimed. "The American independence reduced [the Indians'] numbers by ninety percent, due to the killing, plunder, and barbaric methods that constituted the foundation of the American Republic." And: "There are women, student, and union resistance groups inside the U.S. that oppose American policy in the world, and especially the aggression against Iraq. This historic stream that resists the American policy ... may accumulate real strength that would change the American course regarding the world, especially since the majority of people in these groups are from among the Jews." We're not quite sure what this means, but it's intriguing to imagine Said may think he's finally found a way to put Jewish power to work for emergent Palestine.

OVER A BARREL: OPEC is imposing a 1.7-million-barrels-per-day cutback in member states' production—and it has already pushed up gas prices by as much as a dime per gallon. Forgive us for nursing an obsession, but, if OPEC does manage to stage a comeback, America's own myopic approach to energy policy will be at least partly to blame. While the collapse of oil prices has helped tame inflation and feed economic growth, it has also made our sport-utility-happy society so dependent on cheap gas that now we have to pay OPEC's price. Wouldn't it have been (and still be) better to raise gasoline taxes? This would cool demand, making us less dependent on OPEC. And the proceeds would go into the government's coffers, where they could be put to use paving our streets or fighting crime. Now Americans are still going to pay what is, in effect, a new gas tax—but the revenues will go to the likes of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Venezuela.

ROLLBACK POSITION: In his December address announcing the beginning of Operation Desert Fox against Iraq, President Clinton talked tough about the need to remove Saddam Hussein from power: "The best way to end that threat once and for all is with a new Iraqi government, a government ready to live in peace with its neighbors, a government that respects the rights of its people. Bringing change in Baghdad will take time and effort. We will strengthen our engagement with the full range of Iraqi opposition forces and work with them effectively and prudently." Yet, while Congress recently authorized up to $97 million to support the Iraqi opposition, none of the money's been spent yet—partly because the administration is dragging its feet and partly because some Iraqi groups are refusing to take it. Now comes news that national security adviser Sandy Berger, a longtime foe of all-out efforts to help Iraqis overthrow Saddam, has chosen Kenneth Pollack, a former CIA analyst, as his new Iraq point man at the National Security Council. Pollack cowrote a recent article in *Foreign Affairs* titled "The Rollback Fantasy." The article denounces those who support the liberation option as "either engaging in wishful thinking or cynically playing politics." Alas, Pollack's piece erroneously referred to "Iraq's Sunni majority" as one of the supposed population groups in Iraq that still shores up Saddam, for fear of "Kurdish or Shiite bids for hegemony." Yet Sunni Arabs like Saddam represent no more than 17 percent of Iraqis; Sunni Kurds and Shiite Arabs comprise about 20 percent and 60 percent, respectively. Still, Berger's deputy, James Steinberg, has described Pollack as "a very distinguished analyst of the region"—which leads us to surmise that, at Berger's NSC, the chief qualification to help make policy on Iraq is that you agree with Berger.

FIRST AMENDMENT FUNDAMENTALISM: Is there any news-gathering technique that the First Amendment doesn't protect? Apparently not, according to CNN. On March 24, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in two cases in which citizens are suing law enforcement officials for allowing media organizations—namely, *The Washington Post* and CNN—to tag along on search-and-arrest operations. The citizens claim the cameras, and, by extension, the state, compromised their privacy. (The *Post*, *The New York Times*, and two dozen other heavies have filed an amicus brief in the CNN case.) In court documents, CNN argues that the expectation of privacy "should yield to the important law enforcement interests served through the agents' grants of access to CNN." These interests include "enabling public oversight of law enforcement, deterring crime, and curbing potential police misconduct and danger to police." This is a close call. The facts of the CNN case appear to suggest a troubling state-media invasion of privacy—the network equipped a law enforcement agent with a hidden camera and microphone, and reporters, dressed in plainclothes like the agent, accompanied him. The raid's targets had no way of knowing they were dealing with the media. (This is different from ordinary hidden-camera journalism, in which the media do not depend on the coercive powers of the state to help them gain access to otherwise private locations.) Less troubling, however, are situations in which the reporters accompanying law enforcement are clearly identified, or when they request waivers from the citizens they film, or blur their faces on air. In deciding the case, the Court should not allow itself to be blustered by Ted Turner and company. It should instead strike a balance between the public's right to information and the rights of individuals—including those who may not be guilty of anything—not to have their privacy invaded or to be branded as criminals on television.

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CALL FOR TOILET PAPERS: The publish-or-perish mentality in academia has produced its share of absurd scholarship. And then there's the proposed panel at the upcoming South Atlantic Modern Language Association's November conference in Atlanta. Reader Justin Cammy of Cambridge, Massachusetts, informs us that two graduate students at the University of Kentucky have proposed a panel titled "The Economy of Excrement in English Renaissance Studies" and have put out a call for papers. Scholars are invited to reflect on the "tropes and representations of excrement and/or excretion in literature," "waste management and the social order," or "excrement, expenditure, and the logic of 'the gift.'" It could have been even worse—or better, depending on your point of view: organizers changed the panel's original, blunter, title, "The Economy of Shit in English Renaissance Studies." Notwithstanding this last-minute concession to conventional good taste, the response to the call for papers has so far been light, according to panel organizer Lisa Broome. No doubt scholars are still trying to digest the matter.

HOME NEWS: With this issue, TNR introduces two new contributing writers. Well, reintroduces, actually—both are already familiar to our readers. Contributing editor Lee Siegel moves up the masthead, and Matthew Miller, a former TNR senior editor, is back after a hiatus at *U.S. News & World Report*. Miller is now a senior fellow at the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, a post established with a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to support innovative public policy journalism—which is just what he'll be providing here, beginning with this week's cover article on Medicare. •

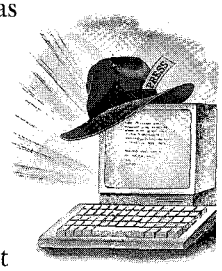
NEW YORK DISPATCH

WATCH MEN

By David Hecht

The followers of the Mouride, one of Senegal's main Sufi Muslim brotherhoods, were mostly peanut farmers until three decades ago, when the Sahara encroached upon their land. So then their grand caliph ordered them to "go forth and work"—and the Mourides heeded. Today, they cluster in the tourist districts of the West's biggest cities, flashing briefcases aglitter with fake Rolex watches and Ray-Ban sunglasses. Many of the profits go back to Touba, the Mouride holy city in the barren interior of Senegal that is now the country's fastest-growing metropolis. There are Mourides in Paris, in Tokyo, in Cincinnati, and, of course, there are Mourides in New York City. Lots of them.

To Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and his supporters, these Senegalese street merchants represent a menace to the public space. As a result, the Mourides are constantly running from police patrols; by the unofficial reckoning of some police officials, 90 percent of arrested street merchants are Mouride. This has not deterred them, however. Indeed, under Giuliani, many have prospered. "It wasn't easy, but we are 'Mouridoulahi,' the ones who undergo many trials and tribulations as we journey towards our God," says shopkeeper Modou Sarr, who was arrested for peddling without a license on his very first day of business. He was 17 then and spoke no English. Today, he is 33, a U.S. citizen, and the owner of a high-rent tourist shop in Times Square—on one of the same corners where he used to dodge police. "They would confiscate goods and arrest me, but I managed to save my pennies and keep my faith. I knew that, if Amadou Bamba prevailed, so could I," he says.



Sarr is referring to the revered Islamic leader Cheikh Amadou Bamba, founder of the Mouride, who told his followers: "Pray as if you will die tomorrow, but work as if you will live forever." All over New York, Bamba's modern-day followers have taken that counsel to heart. Uptown in Harlem, many Mourides have opened legitimate restaurants and shops—and, in so doing, they have changed the face of that impoverished neighborhood, says Randy Daniels, deputy commissioner for economic development in New York state. "African fabric shops, travel agents, and telephone call centers are internationalizing the economy," Daniels says.

Of course, immigrants from other countries in West Africa are also in Harlem—as well as across the Harlem River in the Bronx, where police recently killed Guinean street vendor Amadou Diallo. But in the area around 116th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard—"Little Senegal"—more than 80 percent of businesses are owned by Senegalese. A few blocks away, a Mouride religious center is under construction. The borough of Manhattan has proclaimed an official holiday in Harlem for Bamba, as has the city of Cincinnati.

Unsurprisingly, the Mourides are winning converts among African Americans. Twenty-one-year-old Alpha Elias Abdul Latif, who had belonged to Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, praises "the uncompromising stance of Amadou Bamba—may Allah be pleased with him—against the European domination of Africa and the world." Wendy Wilson Fall moved to Senegal from Washington, D.C., where there is also a growing Mouride community. What she likes is that "it's not a sect that pulls away from the world. Bamba told his followers to engage the world. He was not antimodern, anti-learning, or antiwomen."

She sees parallels between Bamba and Booker T. Washington, who admonished African Americans to pull

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themselves up by their bootstraps. But Bamba has a clear advantage—he supposedly performed miracles. One occurred when Senegal's French colonial rulers put him on a ship to send him into exile: they forbade him from praying, so he walked on the water and laid his prayer rug on the sea. His captors were amazed; eventually he was allowed to return and was granted semi-autonomy over what became Touba and its environs.

Bamba's message is persistence rather than resistance, says Wilson Fall. "Bamba discouraged violence," she says. "Rather, he told his followers to look inward. He said that if you feel that your interior self cannot be destroyed then you'll find that you don't need to react." The Mouride strategy is manifest in a photograph of Bamba, which has been reproduced on countless posters, car stickers, and key chains. In it, Bamba is made invisible, cloaked from head to toe in Islamic robes with only his eyes showing—he is seeing but is not seen. In the various hand-painted copies of the photo he always looks the same, but the background changes. Sometimes he is standing in the middle of the Sahara, sometimes he is among the French colonial army, and sometimes he is in front of Mount Fuji.

These days, Touba is mostly squalid and overcrowded. Yet, with most of the rest of Senegal consisting of a few huts in the sand, Touba is called "paradise on earth." Its giant mosque shimmers in the heat like a mirage. In the city center there's a 10,000-book library, including Bamba's original writings, and dozens of grand palaces and mausoleums for the many Mouride leaders—living and dead. Though Senegal was granted independence in 1960, Touba has unofficially retained its autonomy. No Senegalese police or army dares to enter. The city is run by a dreadlocked warrior caste of Mourides called the Bye Fall. And there are no tax collectors. Touba's sprawling market is the cheapest place in the country to buy electrical appliances and other imports. The city's revenue comes from the donations of followers.

In Harlem, Abdul Latif calls Touba "the ideal Islamic experience." As yet he hasn't left the United States, but "one day, *insha'Allah*, I will go there and live," he says. From Los Angeles, Linda el Amin—an African American convert from Catholicism—sees Touba as evidence that Mouridism is about "getting what you want in this lifetime." She claims that it goes hand in hand with the American way of life: "Bamba taught people to set goals and go after them." An example might be a popular Mouride bumper sticker that reads: "FLY AIR TOUBA." There is no such airline; Touba doesn't even have an airport.

The Mourides' international trade network, on the other hand, is very real. According to Cheikh Seye, executive secretary of an organization called the Mouride Islamic Community of America, about $1 million finds its way from New York to Senegal roughly every three months, through informal banking arrangements. "We're a self-supporting community," he says from an office at the back of an international telephone center on 116th Street. "When people first arrive, we find a place for them to stay in New York and we help them look for business."

The catch is that the city keeps a tight rein on street-vending licenses. A lucky few get them through a city-organized lottery system; the rest are always on the run from a special police task force that cruises midtown in unmarked cars. "We arrest the same guys over and over again," says one officer. One Italian American officer claimed that when he was on vacation in Rome he saw a Senegalese peddler there whom he knew from New York. "When he saw me he ran," the policeman laughs.

The Mouride community helps out peddlers when they lose their goods. Often they're back selling on the streets the same day. But police and city officials have cited that as evidence of organized crime, and, since 1992, the task force has been arresting peddlers on more serious criminal charges. "Before, they'd just spend a day or two in jail and do some community service time," says the task force's new chief, Robert D'Onofrio. "Now we often charge them with selling counterfeit goods, which means they can do up to a year in prison." It also leaves them with a criminal record that can jeopardize their immigration status. Seydina Senghor, the executive director of the Afrika Business Community Inc. and an advocate for Mourides in New York, complains that they buy the counterfeit goods from licensed stores, which the police rarely target. "It's selective enforcement," he says, adding that "the police are often beating and harassing black immigrants whether they have licenses or not." Few Mourides have made formal complaints, however. "We knew it wasn't going to be easy before we came," said Amadou Thiam, who hawks T-shirts with fake logos. "But this is business."

DAVID HECHT writes from New York and West Africa and is coauthor of *Invisible Governance* (Autonomedia).

Making antitrust tougher.

PLAYING MONOPOLY

By Albert A. Foer

Although the Microsoft and Intel cases have been getting most of the headlines lately, there's another antitrust matter before the government that is of potentially greater relevance to consumers: the proposed merger between Exxon and Mobil. Eighty-eight years after the government broke up the Standard Oil monopoly in one of the first great trust-busting crusades of the early twentieth century, these two behemoths are planning the largest marriage in corporate history—a deal worth

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$80 billion. It will go through unless the Federal Trade Commission objects, and there's good reason to believe it won't.

Last year, the FTC approved another large oil merger—British Petroleum's $53 billion acquisition of Amoco. It was merely the latest in a flurry of petroleum combinations that have gone unchallenged in the past several years. In the B.P. deal, under the terms of an agreement with the FTC, the companies said they would divest 134 gas stations in eight cities in which the companies' ownership overlaps, as well as nine light petroleum products terminals. In addition, in 30 cities, the companies would have to make it easier for as many as 1,600 independent retail dealers to switch to other brands. Most experts expect the FTC to strike a similar deal with Exxon and Mobil: in exchange for their selling off some of their assets in certain concentrated markets—probably less than 15 percent of their overall holdings—the companies will be allowed to merge.

Such a bargain would avoid protracted litigation between the government and the oil companies, while allegedly preventing—through the agreed-upon divestiture—too much industry concentration in any particular city or region. Anyway, with gasoline so cheap these days, consumers don't seem particularly exercised about the possibility of concentrating more power over gas-pump prices in an ever-smaller group of companies.

But the lack of public concern doesn't fully explain why this merger is so likely to go through. Indeed, the willingness to approve the Exxon-Mobil merger is emblematic of the government's attitude toward mergers more generally. While sometimes willing to attack monopolies and oligopolies whose concentration levels are very high, the government has treaded too lightly in the presence of trends that are well on their way but have not yet reached the perceived danger zone.

It was not always that way. Back in 1914, Congress passed the Clayton Act, empowering government to attack a merger *before* a monopoly or oligopoly existed. As amended in 1950, the act prohibits mergers where the effect "may be substantially to lessen competition, or to tend to create a monopoly."

The Clayton law is known as an "incipiency statute" because it deals with the possible future effects of mergers and not only their immediate consequences. And, for a while, the courts encouraged the government to interpret it broadly. In the 1966 case of *U.S.* v. *Von's Grocery Co.*, for example, the Supreme Court held that a merger of the third- and sixth-largest grocery chains in Los Angeles, representing a combined market share of just 7.5 percent, considered in the context of a broader merger trend, violated the Clayton Act.

Von's Grocery probably went too far. While the number of grocery stores in the Los Angeles market had declined from more than 5,300 to about 3,800, it was still highly competitive. If *Von's Grocery* had remained the rule, all of our industries would be highly fragmented, and consumers would have lost out on many cost-cutting efficiencies. In addition, small firms would not have been able to sell out to larger ones, thus reducing incentives for entrepreneurship and weakening American competitiveness abroad.

But, if *Von's Grocery* went too far, so did the counterreaction. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration brought to antitrust enforcement an extremely narrow, efficiency-based concept of antitrust law. At the FTC and Justice Department, "Chicago school" free-market economists believed that the government should let the market work out temporary defects on its own, because market forces almost inevitably push the economy toward efficiency. Except in clear cases of collusion, the administration did almost nothing.

Not surprisingly, mergers have become much more common. Today, we are in the midst of what appears to be the greatest merger wave in our history. Major industries—not only petroleum, but banking, electricity, automobiles, airlines, telecommunications, bookselling, and more—are undergoing mind-bendingly rapid structural change. The latest example was the merger of BankBoston—itself the product of a merger between BayBanks and Bank of Boston—and Fleet Financial Group in March. The new bank will be the nation's eighth largest.

Although President Bush launched a modest revival of antitrust enforcement—and although President Clinton has done even more—the current effort is tempered both by a lack of resources and by the constraints of an antitrust system that is still too much in the intellectual debt of Chicago.

And so the Exxon-Mobil merger brings us to an antitrust crossroads. It is true that neither Exxon nor Mobil has particularly large market shares on a national level, and there's little doubt that the FTC will take action in specific cities where the combined share will be more than 20 to 30 percent. But this may not be enough.

Indeed, the key now is for the FTC to think more broadly as it conducts its analysis of the merger. First, the FTC should consider whether it is reasonably likely that other petroleum companies will follow suit if B.P. and Exxon eliminate Amoco and Mobil from the market. The answer is probably yes. After all, if these companies—already quite large—feel they must be much larger in order to compete in a world of low oil prices, smaller companies will likely feel compelled to merge just to keep pace with the industry leaders. While it's appropriate for the FTC to use concentration statistics as a means for measuring the danger, the FTC should also try to gauge the impact of joint ventures—which are very prevalent in the petroleum industry—on competition.

The FTC needs to decide at what point mergers would so hinder competition that a single firm or group of firms would have the power to raise prices

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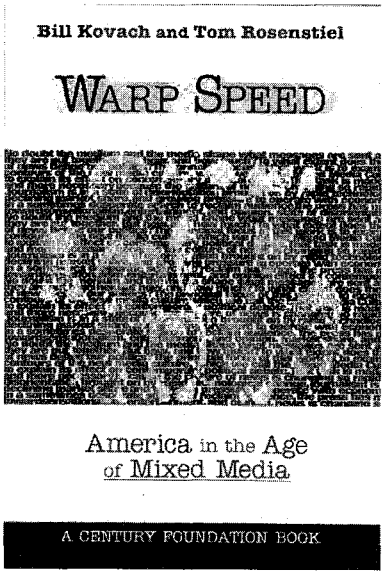

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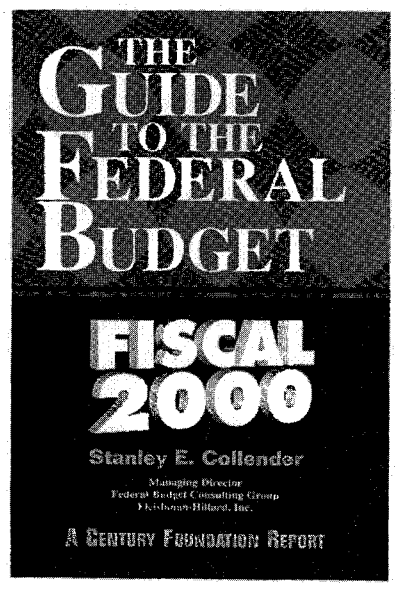

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beyond the competitive level. From the standpoint of policy, it might make more sense to draw a line now, when the largest firms in the industry are merging, rather than waiting until next year or the year after, when smaller firms rush to merge—at which point an industry imbalance would be effectively institutionalized. Surely, we would prefer an industry with firms that are roughly comparable in size to one in which a couple of firms are dramatically larger than the rest.

Such attention might seem rather drastic now, with gasoline cheap. Yet petroleum is historically a cyclical industry. If we encourage the departure of profitable firms today, it is unlikely that new firms will enter the market when prices go up. (Barriers to entry in the oil industry are high.) When and if OPEC regains its previous market power, it's possible the U.S. consumer would be better served by having eight major oil companies dealing with OPEC rather than, say, three or four. It's easier for a cartel to monitor its internal price controls if it has to deal with a small number of buyers.

Yes, some economists would scoff at notions like these. They would say that government efforts to manage the future will give rise to efficiency-harming bureaucratic intervention. If the government can stop a combination based on its predictions and desires about how an industry should be structured, they'll ask, isn't the next step national industrial policy?

But this argument is misleading—and not merely because in the end the courts will have the opportunity to decide whether the FTC has presented a compelling case. Ultimately, it is impossible not to make a decision on the Exxon-Mobil merger without basing it on some sort of prediction, for even a decision to approve the merger is tantamount to a prediction that what the companies will accomplish is in consumers' best interests. And it's not as if merging companies' projections for their new efficiencies have a strong track record. In 1995, for example, when the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads wanted to merge, they projected huge efficiency gains. Within a year after the merger, however, the new railroad was plagued with logistical problems.

Predictions about industry will always be imperfect, of course, but that doesn't mean the government has no right to make them. If you believe that government has an obligation to police anticompetitive behavior, then the government must consider the future impact of mergers as well as the immediate effects. And, in the case of the Exxon-Mobil merger, a failure to act now might require more drastic action later on—after consumers have already paid the price, quite literally, and after an important opportunity for reinvigorating antitrust law has passed.

ALBERT A. FOER is president of the American Antitrust Institute, an independent, nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C.

BURMA DISPATCH

LADY IN WAITING

By Anna Husarska

Being arrested is never pleasant, but, when your detainers are wearing flip-flops and sarongs, it's somehow less threatening. I had already given my exposed rolls of film to an acquaintance to smuggle out of Burma, so the police had to settle for an unexposed one left in the camera. My notes, in Polish, were briefly examined, then ignored. And with that I was summarily deported—just a few hours before my planned departure.

I had been taken into custody just after leaving the headquarters of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) in Rangoon, where I had met with 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. Throughout my stay in Burma, everyone kept asking me excitedly, "Will you see the Lady?" So it seemed natural that my interrogators, too, would ask the same thing. "Did you see the Lady?" they barked.

That her admirers and detractors alike refer to Suu Kyi as "the Lady" is a testament to how she has become the absolute center of everyone's attention. In the junta mouthpiece *The New Light of Myanmar*, she is "[w]hite alien's wife Suu Kyi who is conspiring to sell the Union into the hands of neocolonialists." The paper also runs poems about her. A sample from the December 23, 1998, edition: "Here, woman, the people knowing/The story of puppet on strings/Nothing good you are doing/Even when not in power/Adorned with deception of yours/Gives orders, a woman inferior/Just retrace your steps/To your husband, go back/You were not asked to come."

To the Burmese people, however, Suu Kyi is practically a saint, the repository of all their hopes—which is both uplifting and a little unsettling. There is a spontaneous cult of personality around her. A business woman asked me: "You like my dress top? *She* wears a similar one." A bike renter in Mandalay explained it to me according to a simple formula: "She is the daughter of the father of the nation. So the Lady *is* the nation." To prove it, he gave me five different banknotes emblazoned with the picture of her father, Gen. Aung San. Throughout Burma, streets, parks, and squares are named after him, and his statues are everywhere. Although he was assassinated in July 1947, six months before Burma's independence, he is the national hero and, in a paradoxical twist, the founder of the Burmese Army, which controls the current junta.

The military dictatorship began in 1962 with a coup

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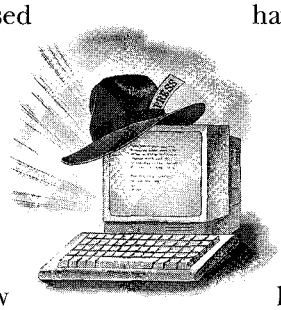
that brought Gen. Ne Win to power. Soon the country was on the autarkical "Burmese way to socialism," which, like all roads in this direction, was a bumpy downhill path. Opposition grew, and, in June 1988, Ne Win resigned. Burma enjoyed a "Rangoon spring" only to see it crushed in a major military crackdown that began on August 8, 1988. In April of that year, Aung San Suu Kyi had come to visit her ailing mother from Oxford, England, where she had been living with her British husband, Michael Aris, and their two sons. Even before they were married, she had written to Aris: "I only ask one thing, that, should my people need me, you would help me to do my duty by them."

In the wake of the crackdown, the Burmese people's need was all too apparent. On August 26, Suu Kyi spoke at a rally outside Rangoon's Shwedagon Pagoda: "I could not, as my father's daughter, remain indifferent to all that was going on. This national crisis could, in fact, be called the second struggle for national independence." This speech sealed her position as the leader of the burgeoning democratic movement.

By September, the death toll was in the thousands. The generals formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council, known as SLORC—a rather unfortunate name that, on the advice of a Washington-based public relations firm, was later changed to SPDC for State Peace and Development Council. Within a week of SLORC's formation, Suu Kyi and dissident Burmese officers founded the NLD. In 1990, demonstrating its total ignorance of the national mood, the junta confidently organized elections. The NLD, led by Suu Kyi, won 82 percent of the seats even though, a few months earlier, the generals had put her under house arrest. The junta refused to hand over power and increased repression.



Ne Win, now 88, continues to wield power from behind the scenes. As for Suu Kyi, she remained under house arrest for the next six years. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to see her. Her family house is off-limits for most locals and foreigners; even DHL can't deliver packages. And her movements are restricted when she tries to visit supporters outside Rangoon. Twice last summer, when the military blocked her route, she conducted a silent protest by remaining in her car for several days.

These standoffs were planned to coincide both with a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and with the anniversary of the August 1988 crackdown or "8/8/88" as it is known here. "People all over the world need to be alerted to what is happening in Burma [or else] it will be difficult for them to voice their support for what we are doing," Suu Kyi explained at the time. "I think keeping lines of communication open is very, very important."

Keeping those lines open is easier said than done. Nobody who is anybody in the NLD is allowed a working telephone. To arrange my meeting with Suu Kyi, I had to make three nighttime visits to the home of a go-between—meowing like a cat to get his dogs' attention without alerting the surveillance team across the street and retrieving messages from him left on a gate outside his house. I met Suu Kyi at the party headquarters in Rangoon. The shabby, two-story building is easy to spot because of the crowd of plainclothes and uniformed officers milling about outside. The inside is bare, save for a poster of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in English, many portraits of Gen. Aung San, and the NLD flag, a yellow fighting peacock on a red background.

When I arrived, the hall downstairs was filled with women and their malnourished children, many crying. Suu Kyi stood at the front, handing out spoonfuls of some type of formula to each child as his name was called on a bullhorn. Each mother received a bottle of the formula to take home. This long, noisy, exhausting event was obviously a way for her to stay in touch with her people, just like the distribution of rice that she does personally every Monday. However, attendance is low because of intimidation by military intelligence.

I spoke with her deputy, Tin Oo, about what it would take to trigger an uprising against the junta. A students' revolt is unlikely: since December 1996, the generals have kept all the faculties closed. This general-turned-dissident thought that economic desperation would produce dissent. I couldn't imagine it getting more desperate.

Finally, Suu Kyi joined us. At age 53, she looks a good 20 years younger. She is graceful and possesses what the French call *charme hypnotique*, yet she is also tough and matter-of-fact. At the time, I did not know the news that she knew and was probably devastated by: namely, that her husband, whom she had not seen since Christmas of 1995, was dying of prostate cancer. The authorities have refused to grant him a visa, and thus Suu Kyi has been given a Hobson's choice. If she leaves Burma to see her husband, she will almost certainly not be allowed back in. And, if she stays, she will never get a chance to say goodbye to Aris before he dies.

I asked her about a rumored deal whereby, in exchange for World Bank aid and a promise by the NLD to rescind its calls to convene the parliament, the generals would release political prisoners, open a dialogue with the NLD, and allow it to function as a political party. Suu Kyi pooh-poohed the rumor: the NLD was ready to talk and have negotiations with the authorities with or without the World Bank. But the NLD would never put a price tag on giving up its democratic right to convene parliament.

Perhaps Suu Kyi wanted to discredit the deal because it would have interfered with current international economic sanctions, which, the NLD maintains, are vital. But, as one Western diplomat pointed out to me, Burma's very backwardness—the only major foreign investment here is a controversial pipeline in the south owned jointly by Total of France, Unocal of the United States, and the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (with

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15 percent staying in the hands of the Burmese junta)—makes the country less vulnerable to economic pressure. "Can a country that for years was closed to the outside world and practiced autarky be seriously hit by isolation?" the diplomat asked.

Meanwhile, the junta's financial policy is bizarre enough to scare off most would-be investors even if existing sanctions were lifted. The official exchange rate is six kyat to a dollar, while the unofficial one is 60 times higher. Banknotes have peculiar denominations of 45 and 90 kyat because Ne Win believes in the power of the number nine. In September 1987, the government canceled all banknotes of the two highest denominations, thus wiping out 80 percent of the money in circulation.

I asked Suu Kyi whether she did not fear that the Burmese, seeing no positive results from her pacifist resistance methods, would turn to violence like the Albanians in Kosovo have. She snapped that the Burmese knew hers was the right way—Southeast Asia is not the Balkans. Suu Kyi was very impressed by Vaclav Havel's classic essay "The Power of the Powerless." We spoke about Havel's house arrest, and this led to a discussion of the different ways totalitarian regimes treat dissidents. I asked if the authorities' campaign against the NLD was effective. "Yes," said Suu Kyi. "This is very serious; imprisonments are seriously hampering our work."

I later learned the exact figures: 193—almost half—of the NLD parliamentarians elected in 1990 are in detention or, as the junta puts it, "sequestered" in "guest houses" where conversations "foster greater understanding of the situation in the country." Most jailed NLD members are released only if they renounce all political activities. Almost 3,000 members have done so since September—the official radio, TV, and newspaper keep a tally. Suu Kyi maintains that the very fact that the government bothers to publicize the numbers shows how afraid it is of the NLD. Furthermore, she said, many of those who supposedly resigned had not been active members, while activists who are forced to resign often continue party activities.

Nonetheless, a Western diplomat who has been in Rangoon for a long time called the whole Burmese political scene "virtual politics": the SPDC has no credibility while the NLD is bottled up. Although the NLD recently created shadow ministries, there is not much it can do with half of the members of parliament "guest-housed." "What will be left?" the diplomat asked with genuine worry. "Just a core of heroes around the Lady?"

In Mandalay, an 84-year-old woman asked me, "Do you think I will live to see *this* change?" It took all my optimism to mumble that maybe the dissidents can turn the tables on Gen. Ne Win and make the number nine work for them—i.e., overthrow the junta on 9/9/99. But she knew I said it out of sympathy for her rather than conviction. But perhaps not everything is lost. The policewoman who searched me after my arrest was assigned to watch me at the airport on the last leg of my deportation. Boredom made her talkative. It turned out that she had not been told why she was searching me. "What did you do to get into trouble?" she asked. "You don't know? I went to see Aung San Suu Kyi," I said. "Oh, you saw the Lady!" she exclaimed. "How is she?" •

Conservative confusion on feminism.

VICTIMIZERS

By Cathy Young

This ought to be a giddy moment for conservative critics of feminism. For one thing, the fervor with which many of the women's movement's leaders stuck by President Clinton has exposed their willingness to sacrifice cherished feminist principles—for instance, that women who accuse men of sexual misconduct must be believed and supported—to politics. Meanwhile, the scandal has prompted many Americans to question those principles themselves, particularly the notion that personal behavior is necessarily political. The time is ripe, it would seem, for conservatives to offer an appealing alternative. So why haven't they managed to do so? The trouble is that they are mired in a web of contradictions of their own, resulting in a muddled vision of relations between men and women that, ironically, is plagued by the same logical inconsistencies as that of the feminists.

At the heart of the conservative quandary is the movement's inability to come to terms with women's new roles. Notwithstanding the presence of many capable conservative women in public life, ambivalent if not hostile attitudes toward women's nondomestic pursuits

CATHY YOUNG is the author of *Ceasefire! Why Women and Men Must Join Forces to Achieve True Equality*, published by the Free Press in February.

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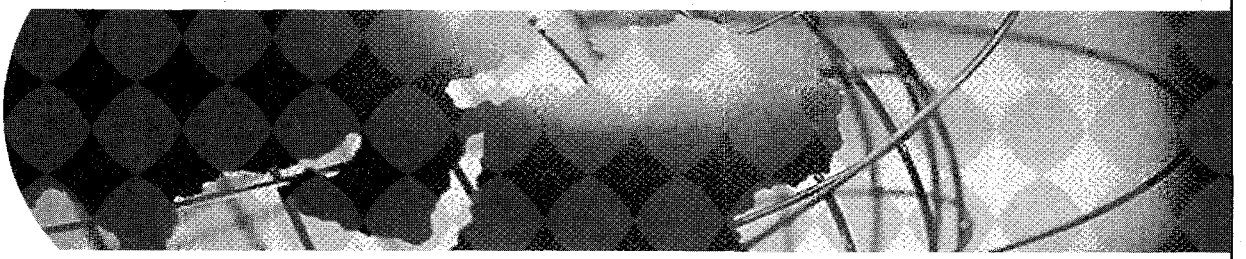

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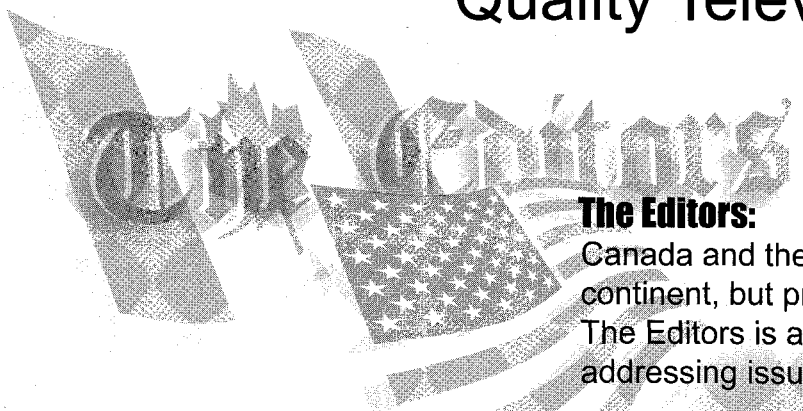

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remain alive and well on the right. While some conservatives have cited women's advancement in the workplace—particularly in the Reagan-Bush years—as proof of the beneficence of markets, prominent conservative commentator David Frum, for instance, suggests in his 1994 book *Dead Right* that the very Reagan policies that helped "goose the job market and thus entice women to work outside the home" contributed to family breakdown.

True, most conservatives have amended "a woman's place is in the home" to "a mother's place is at home while the children are young." And, of course, not all concerns about the welfare of children in dual-earner families are an expression of "backlash" (though there is plenty of unwarranted alarmism on the subject). But the respectable right is a bit too hospitable to extreme screeds that have less to do with worries about children than with anxieties about gender. Two years ago, *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page actually published an article by Harvard government professor Harvey Mansfield complaining that "manliness is endangered by women having equal access to jobs outside the home." The 1998 book *Domestic Tranquility: A Brief Against Feminism* by F. Carolyn Graglia, which warned that the assertiveness and the "analytical mind" required by careers warp women's sexual and maternal natures, received glowing reviews in the conservative press and dust-jacket blurbs from Midge Decter and William Kristol.

A few years ago, after the publication of Christina Hoff Sommers's 1994 critique of feminist radicalism, *Who Stole Feminism?: How Women Have Betrayed Women*, it seemed that conservatives were ready to embrace Sommers's moderate "equity feminism" that supported women's new roles but rejected victimhood and gender warfare. In some ways, though, it was never a comfortable fit. To many conservatives, the female gains Sommers hailed as "a great American success story" are more of an American tragedy. While Sommers stressed the good fortunes of modern women and accused feminists of exaggerating their miseries, it is at least as fashionable among conservatives to argue that women today are miserable. That's the premise of the two critiques of feminism wowing the right this year: Wendy Shalit's *A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue* and Danielle Crittenden's *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman.*

In the traditionalist view, of course, women's distress is the result of social changes brought about by feminism. Because single women are now free to have premarital sex, men don't want to commit to marriage; because it's now normal for wives and mothers to hold jobs, women lucky enough to find husbands still have to work due to cultural and economic pressures when they'd rather stay home; and, because of liberal divorce laws, women can never be secure in their marriages.

This pessimistic view may be a part of the cultural right's growing general gloom about American society. But it probably bears about the same relation to reality as the feminist view that discrimination and bias against women are running rampant in America.

To state the obvious, the vast majority of men and women still marry, though they do so later than men and women did a generation ago. The "why buy the cow when the milk is free?" theory of sex and marriage—championed by many of the same conservatives who complain about the loss of romance in our culture—is not only unromantic but unrealistic. Crittenden, who espouses this theory, undercuts it with some of her own observations: about panicky thirtysomething single women who had spurned marriage offers when they were in their twenties (offers from men evidently undissuaded by the free milk); about women so preoccupied with their independence that their boyfriends, eager to start families, have to beg them to tie the knot. There may be important differences between women and men, including men's greater propensity to enjoy no-strings sex, but this hardly means that men do not also feel a need for marriage and children or that women have no sexual desires beyond lifelong monogamy.

Work-family conflicts are undoubtedly a real problem, but most women are not longing to go home. In a 1997 Pew Research Center poll, fewer than a quarter of mothers working full-time said that they would prefer to stay home if they could; about the same percentage of stay-at-home mothers wanted to work full-time.

But the mother of all conservative gender myths is that the liberalization of divorce has robbed women of marital security by freeing men to walk out on them. This notion is supported by the *First Wives Club* cliché of divorce—the swinish husband ditching his loyal wife for a nubile blonde. Studies consistently show, however, that, two-thirds of the time, it's the women who walk out. Far fewer women than men agree that unhappily married parents should stay together for the sake of the children. Divorced women, moreover, tend to be happier than divorced men and are far less likely to regret the divorce; recent research even disputes the assumption that they experience more economic hardship. But why let facts get in the way of ideology? In a 1997 *National Review* article on the harms of divorce, political scientist John DiIulio cites health data suggesting that it's men who suffer the most—only to conclude that easy divorce is "a great bargain for sex-seeking, social-responsibility-shirking guys, and a near-total disaster for women."

One might notice that much conservative rhetoric about the harm feminism has inflicted on women also points the finger at a more familiar villain: the male, who will be a pig if given a chance and who has been given such a chance by the collapse of traditional norms. The pro-life movement likes to portray women who have abortions as victims of selfish boyfriends unwilling to support the children they father. Even women's labor force participation can be blamed on male piggery: in a 1996 *Commentary* article, David Gelernter argues that the removal of the stigma against

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mothers working outside the home has left women unprotected from "the predatory interests of the typical man," who "would always have been happy to pack his wife off to work" even if it hurt his children. (Never mind 50 years of poll data showing higher support among women than among men for wives' employment.)

With this fixation on the evil that men do to women, the sexual politics of the right start to look uncannily like a mirror image of radical feminism. Even the language can be the same: abortion is labeled "surgical rape"; the sexual revolution, conservative *Human Events* magazine editor Terry Jeffrey charged on "Crossfire" recently, was "a war against women."

Victim feminism and victim antifeminism converge in Wendy Shalit's *A Return to Modesty*, a strange mix of Victorian pieties about womanhood and feminist hyperbole (ours, says Shalit, is a "truly misogynist culture" that accepts "the rapist's view of womanhood" because it won't let women be women). It is, no doubt, the first book ever to boast blurbs from both neoconservative doyenne Gertrude Himmelfarb and lunatic-fringe feminist Andrea Dworkin. Shalit, the 23-year-old darling of the right, embraces not only conservative myths of female victimhood but the feminist ones as well. She agrees that women and girls face constant abuse, violence, and degradation at the hands of men, as well as the ravages of low self-esteem and eating disorders—only she thinks the culprit is not patriarchy but the loss of respect for female modesty. Echoing the feelings-over-facts attitude for which conservatives have rightly derided the cultural left, she even suggests that flawed studies and false charges matter less than the underlying truth: "A lot of young women are trying to tell us that they are very unhappy."

While conservative writers on gender may not actually claim that "the personal is political," they do share one of the most problematic assumptions of modern feminism: that women's unhappiness is not a personal but a social problem. There are other parallels. Ideologues in both camps tend to treat female choices they dislike as not real choices at all. (Stay-at-home mothers are victims of patriarchal oppression; working mothers are victims of feminist cultural coercion.) Both modern feminism and neo-traditionalism basically see men and women as adversaries, even if conservatives are less overt about it; they assail feminists for treating relations between the sexes as a power struggle but in the next breath talk about women's loss of "bargaining power" due to premarital sex. Both believe that women deserve special protection from bad men and other bad things, even if feminists are less overt about it; much of their recent agenda in such areas as sexual harassment, violence, divorce, and child custody involves demands for protections whose paternalism is only slightly camouflaged.

The main difference is that conservatives urge women to accept significant restrictions on their freedom in exchange for protection, while feminists insist that women should be able to do as they please and climb back on the Victorian pedestal (for example, demand to be shielded from raunchy talk at the office) whenever they feel like it.

Just as feminists have won real gains, social conservatives have raised important issues, from the fraying of family bonds as a result of the cult of personal autonomy to the drawbacks of sexual permissiveness. But both feminists who insist that women are as oppressed as ever and conservatives who see nothing but cultural decay in the past 30 years underestimate American culture's flexibility. Most dual-earner couples manage to have a healthy family life with a workable balance of job and home responsibilities. Typically, the balance falls more or less along traditional gender lines—though men's domestic and parental contributions are far more substantial than is often assumed, and role reversals (which conservatives tend either to dismiss as irrelevant or to view with outright loathing) are becoming more common.

It's bad enough when conservatives take a censorious tone toward women who breach traditional boundaries. It's even worse for them to portray every trend they dislike in relations between the sexes as a boon for men and a calamity for women, whether this is a cynical strategy or an expression of sincere concern. These arguments imply that women's problems are more deserving of sympathy and concern than men's—an attitude already far too prevalent in our culture, partly in response to the very real history of discrimination against women and partly due to the traditional sympathy for the damsel in distress. This is patronizing toward women but also unfair to men; neither conservatives nor liberals, for instance, show much interest in the problems of divorced fathers.

In fact, the critique of the "divorce culture" would be more honest and persuasive if it took account of irresponsible wives and abandoned husbands. Likewise, the arguments against sexual permissiveness would be less divisive if they acknowledged that men, too, can be hurt by the separation of sex from emotion and by premature sexual experience. Survey data from 1994 and 1997 show that, while more sexually active girls (62 percent) wish they had waited longer to lose their virginity, so do nearly half of boys, and about a quarter of high school boys and girls alike feel stressed as a result of pressure to have sex.

It's hard to tell which is the greater irony: that feminist claims of women's victimization should be marshaled in defense of patriarchy, or that conservative claims should serve to reinforce the feminist obsession with women's injuries and the tendency to pit women against men. What's increasingly clear is that both ideologies are irrelevant to the lives of the majority of men and women who are interested neither in gender warfare nor in going back to a mythical idyllic past but are trying to find their own balance between the modern and the traditional. •

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Global Capital Markets: An Exchange

Irrational expectations

In *The Crisis of Global Capitalism*, I made the bold assertion that economic theory misrepresents the way financial markets operate. The theory of rational expectations treats financial markets as if they were in continual equilibrium; in fact, they are in continual disequilibrium. I contend that the notion of equilibrium is appropriate only for markets that deal with known quantities. Financial markets deal with quantities that are not only unknown but also unknowable: they try to discount a future that is contingent on how it is discounted at present. Instead of passively discounting the future, financial markets play an active role in shaping the future that they are supposed to reflect. There is a two-way connection between expectations and the events to which they relate, which does not necessarily produce a correspondence between the two.

Rational expectations theory claims that, on the whole, markets discount the future accurately, and deviations from this general rule are random. In my view, it is unlikely that financial markets will anticipate the future correctly, and, if a correspondence occurs, it can be attributed to the impact of biased expectations on the actual course of events rather than to rational expectations.

Market participants cannot base their decisions on knowledge and information alone: they must bring their judgment to bear, and their judgment is bound to be biased because it has nothing definite to correspond to. The outcome is genuinely indeterminate. The bias prevailing in financial markets may be self-reinforcing or self-correcting, but one thing is virtually certain: it does not constitute rational expectations.

In "The Amateur" (February 8), Robert M. Solow dismisses my arguments as ill-informed. Other economists have been less polite. They may well be right because, as Solow correctly points out, my arguments have not been submitted to scholarly examination, and my success in financial markets may have encouraged me to indulge in delusions. But he, and the other economists who dismissed my book as nonsense, may also be wrong. It would not be the first time that a discipline takes leave of common sense. Remember the medieval scholars who debated how many angels could dance on the head of a pin.

I believe that my arguments deserve to be considered on their merit instead of being dismissed on the grounds that they come from an amateur. Solow says that the concepts of reflexivity and fallibility are embarrassingly banal, and economists are not so obtuse as to have left them out of account. On the first point I agree with him: fundamental concepts like these could not be true if reasonable people could not acknowledge them as obvious. It is on the second point that we part company. Economists have ignored the most important aspect of fallibility and reflexivity, namely the divergence between outcomes and expectations. Solow claims that they allowed for it by introducing the notion of multiple equilibria. I disagree. In my view, the divergence is a source of disequilibrium. Multiple equilibrium is just a contrivance to fit the theory of rational expectations to the facts. It reminds me of the contortions that medieval astronomers went through in trying to explain the movement of heavenly bodies before they recognized that the earth revolves around the sun. The time may be ripe for a paradigm shift.

The theory of rational expectations is contradicted by the empirical evidence. For instance, rational expectations theory implies that it is impossible to generate exceptional returns in the stock market on a consistent basis. But, according to this theory, my investment performance over the years is an impossible fluke. And I am not the only one with superior performance. Rigorous empirical studies by economists themselves show that stock prices do not follow a random walk and that market participants' expectations may differ in a systematic manner from actual prices. These studies have found that many bell curves have so-called thick tails incompatible with the random-walk implication of the rational expectations theory. Recent events have provided us with a stark and ominous example of such "thick tails." In September 1998, Long-Term Capital Management (LTCM), a hedge fund that traded on the basis of rational expectations, nearly melted down the financial markets.

Even more damaging, in my view, is the inability of economic theory to explain trend-following behavior. Trend-following behavior is hard to reconcile with the concept of equilibrium. Yet trend-following behavior is ubiquitous in financial markets. Freely floating exchange rates are notorious for generating long-lasting trends that carry them far from any supposed equilibrium level. Yet many economists cling to the idea that with suitable modifications rational expectations theory could explain and predict exchange rates.

The rational expectations approach could still be very useful if it were treated as a purely theoretical construct and if we remember the assumptions on which it is built. Take the Black-Scholes model. It provides a method of pricing options that allows some people to sell options and others to buy. But it can be quite dangerous if the theory is taken as a representation of reality. For instance, by treating financial markets as if they were in continuous equilibrium, rational expectations theory fails to take into account the systemic risk caused by trend-following behavior.

The risk is real. Trend-following behavior was at the heart of the global financial crisis that erupted in Thailand in July 1997, but its influence is not confined to the periphery of the global capitalist system. Professional option writers engage in so-called Delta hedging to protect against losses, and Delta hedging generates automatic trend-following behavior. As long as the various market risks cancel one another out, no harm is done; but occasionally the risks pile up on one side, and Delta hedging can unleash an avalanche of selling. That is what happened in the Wall Street crash of 1987 as a consequence of widespread portfolio insurance; it has occurred repeatedly in the currency markets, particularly in the Japanese yen; and then there was the LTCM fiasco. Both the trading strategies of LTCM and the value-at-risk models used by banks and investment banks relied on the theory of rational expectations. The sophisticated risk management techniques boil down to stop-loss orders, and stop-loss orders generate automatic trend-following behavior akin to Delta hedging. Without the timely intervention of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, the losses of LTCM would have been magnified by forced liquidation, creating a situation where it would have been impossible to distinguish which counterparty was good for its obligations. Rational expectations theory simply does not allow for such dire consequences.

I suspect that prices in financial mar-

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kets do not bring supply and demand into balance as they do in other markets where both supply and demand are known quantities. Participants are rightly uncertain about the future. Their decisions to buy or sell are influenced by market movements. Prices do not clear the market as they would in an auction; rather, they leave a number of potential buyers and sellers milling around, some more anxious than others. Each decision to buy or sell makes a market impact that triggers other decisions. This is a far cry from the postulate of a continuous equilibrium.

Why should the postulate be made in the first place? Because economics claims to be a scientific discipline, and, in that capacity, it must be able to show how prices are determined. But that is not a valid justification if prices are, in fact, not determined at all. That is what I believe to be the case.

Solow says, "By the standards of any discipline, this is not a theory at all." He and other economists will accept a theory as scientific only if it is capable of determining the equilibrium position. Accordingly, the statement that outcomes in financial markets are genuinely indeterminate is not acceptable as a scientific theory; nevertheless, it may be true. I believe that my critique of economic theory is justified even if I do not have a more powerful theory to propose in its place.

As I argue in the book, economic theory set itself an impossible task when it tried to imitate physics. The study of social phenomena should not model itself on the study of nature, as economic theory has done, because the fallibility of human participants poses problems that are absent in the study of nature. I envisage financial markets as an evolving, historical process where one change leads to another rather than a timeless, eternally valid equation of supply and demand. My own boom-bust theory does not aspire to scientific status, yet it may shed more light on how financial markets operate than the contrived constructs of equilibrium theory.

In the disagreement between economists like Solow and me, there is a lot more at stake than abstract theory. Important policy issues hinge on our interpretation of financial markets. Should markets be regulated? Do we need an international lender of last resort? The prevailing wisdom acclaims the merits of imposing market discipline. But if financial markets are inherently unstable then by imposing market discipline we are imposing instability, and how much instability can society tolerate?

GEORGE SOROS

GEORGE SOROS is chairman of Soros Fund Management and the Open Society Institute.

Sound economics

I thank George Soros for his courteous reply, but I am not inclined to change my mind. Maybe the version of financial economics that Soros attacks as so utterly misguided is the one that has penetrated the financial press. It is, however, a caricature. I have no special interest in defending modern finance theory, but I think it is important to get this straight, lest Soros's own ideas acquire spurious validity as a practical corrective to academic moonshine.

Finance theory contains, along with some Panglossian stuff, a whole literature on "bubbles," speculative booms unrelated to "fundamentals," that live off self-confirming expectations until, for one reason or another, they burst. There is even a respected body of work showing how completely irrelevant events—sunspots, for instance—can mold market happenings, both real and financial, if only because enough participants act as if they mattered. Some of these pathologies are compatible with "rational expectations" (about which I have suspicions, too). If you believe, events confirm the belief.

Presumably, Soros would approve of at least the general direction of these strands of research, if he knew about them. They are trying to comprehend the kinds of cumulative errors and instabilities that he has observed as a participant. That is a bit too emollient, however. The academic research I have been describing goes the whole nine yards. It makes its assumptions explicit; it checks that those assumptions are just enough to imply the desired results. It looks explicitly for measured characteristics that might be able to distinguish a sunspot from a reflection of fundamentals. It tries to figure out when a bubble shows intrinsic signs of bursting. It may not have succeeded altogether, but at least it is trying to be a theory.

Soros thinks that I reject his "boom-bust" theory because it does not predict a determinate outcome of any given episode. But that was not my complaint. The trouble with the theory, I argued, was that it does not actually say anything at all. Every assertion has an escape clause so that the theory is compatible with just about any imaginable course of events. It is odd that I should have to insist on this point to a disciple and onetime student of Karl Popper, whose view of scientific inference made falsifiability by observation the distinguishing characteristic of a generalization with empirical content. To Popper, the content of a theory is precisely the set of outcomes with which it is incompatible. By that standard, the boom-bust theory seems to have little content.

Soros asserts that "[security] prices are, in fact, not determined at all." What can that mean? Every quoted security has a price, or a bid-asked range. No financial theory claims to be able to predict that price exactly, so that cannot be what this is all about. Does Soros mean that today's or tomorrow's price is random? Then a theory should say something testable about the underlying probabilities. Does he mean that the uncertainty is too erratic even to be described by probabilities? I would have some sympathy with that view (as did John Maynard Keynes), but I fear Soros has no idea what a can of worms is thereby opened. If anything goes, he has no theory. If not everything goes, he has not begun to give us criteria for judging its compatibility with his theory.

I am interested in practical issues, too. Take one of his examples: Do we need an international lender of last resort? I presume he thinks that we do; at least his book has a sort of semi-proposal along that line. Among the questions he does not ask, let alone answer, are the following: Does the organizer of such lending need to be the main provider of capital? How is eligibility for a last-resort loan to be decided? What interest rate should the lender of last resort charge a potential borrower? Will the prospect of such a loan induce potential borrowers to take excessive risks? Without answers, the very notion of a lender of last resort is hopelessly vague. If you want to read an informed, considered, non-naïve answer, try the lecture given to the American Finance Association in January by Stanley Fischer, the first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, and also every inch an academic economist.

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A Medicare fix that can really work.

PREMIUM IDEA

By Matthew Miller

If the liberals on the just-dissolved National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare are to be believed, the reform plan pushed by its chairman, Democratic Senator John Breaux, and backed both by commission Republicans and by Democratic Senator Bob Kerrey, is about as evil as health policy can get. "They're jeopardizing the health and welfare of frail old people," says former Medicare program chief Bruce Vladeck. "These guys don't want to protect senior citizens from the industry," says Democratic Representative Jim McDermott of Washington. "I don't trust it," says Senator Jay Rockefeller.

But these liberals should know better. The scheme they're bashing, known as "premium support," is modeled largely on the health plan that now serves Rockefeller, McDermott, and nine million other federal workers and their family members. Today, Medicare basically sets prices and reimburses doctors and hospitals directly for a detailed menu of services. Seniors pay premiums of $46 per month, along with a 20 percent copayment for doctors' bills and a $768 deductible for most hospital stays. Under premium support, the program would help Medicare's 39 million beneficiaries buy an insurance policy instead. Premiums would be set through competitive bids among local health plans each year; seniors would choose during an enrollment period; and, under Breaux's version, the feds would pay 88 percent of the weighted average cost of the plans selected (matching today's overall 88–12 cost split between government and retirees). If seniors preferred a plan that cost more than the federal payment to which they were entitled, they would add more out of their own pockets.

Squabbles over this idea, over what form a new drug benefit should take, and over President Clinton's call to use the surplus to bolster Medicare deadlocked the 17-member commission in early March, leaving it without the eleven votes required to make official recommendations. Although Breaux says he'll try to move a bill anyway, the standoff probably dooms any chance for legislation between now and 2001, squandering a precious chance to get ahead of Medicare's rendezvous with 77 million baby boomers a decade from now.

Though liberals will be tempted to dance on the commission's grave, they'd be wrong to do so. President Clinton's hard-won budget surpluses, after all, have finally freed Medicare from being viewed as a money pot for near-term deficit reduction, leaving both parties poised to expand a 1965-era benefit package that's stingier than 80 percent of private plans. And the experience of six million satisfied seniors already enrolled in Medicare's managed care plans suggests that, far from being a threat to retirees, the drive to bring competition to Medicare could instead be the first step on the path to universal health coverage, American style. The surest sign of this is also the debate's most delicious irony: the "premium support" Republicans fawn over today is just a different label for the "managed competition" they spat on when Ira Magaziner and Hillary Clinton peddled it in 1993.

As the commission's collapse proves, Medicare's coming overhaul will be a complex, tortuous process that raises all the big questions of self-government. Can a democracy summon the will to fix looming problems without a galvanizing crisis? Can the center govern and put flesh on "third way" reforms that harness private interest for public good? Or will the Medicare-industrial complex foil centrists with high-minded objections that mask bottom-line greed? For now, in the wake of the commission's demise, the answers turn largely on whether Bill Clinton would rather leave a bipartisan Medicare fix as part of his legacy—or use Medicare as a political club to take back Congress and elect Al Gore.

The beginning of wisdom on Medicare's woes involves a paradox: the program costs too much and covers too little. At $220 billion this year, Medicare, like U.S. health care generally, spends far more per person than do other advanced nations and without better results. Costs are slated to rise toward $3 trillion by 2030, or from 2.5 percent to six percent of GDP. Medicare's share of federal spending will thus rise from twelve percent to roughly 30 percent. How can this surge be funded? Medicare's 2.9 percent payroll tax could double to keep the trust fund that covers hospital services solvent. Trillions of general

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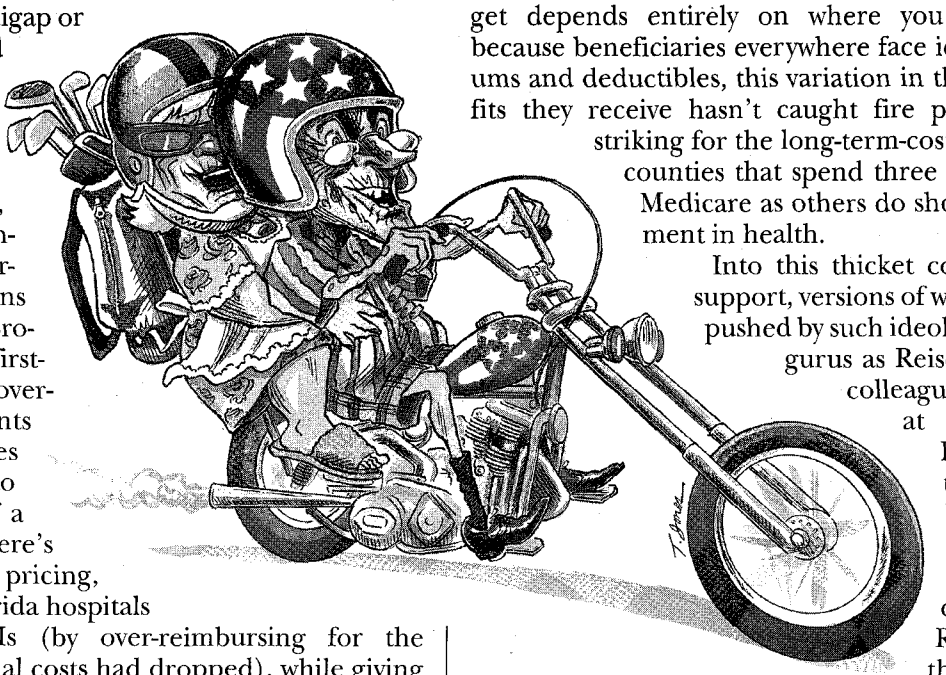
revenue dollars could be diverted, stealing the equivalent of a shiny new Pentagon or ten Education Departments from our kids' discretionary budget choices each year. If you don't like these options, you're left shifting more of the burden to seniors, millions of whom will already be struggling thanks to inadequate savings and pensions, as well as Social Security benefits that (even before potential trims) almost surely won't rise as fast as health costs. For many of tomorrow's elderly, these numbers spell shrunken living standards that are hard to square with the growing rage for early retirement. Something's got to give.

Yet, as Robert Reischauer of the Brookings Institution points out, potential insolvency is only one of the "four I's" plaguing Medicare, since the program is also inadequate, inefficient, and inequitable. Unlike most private plans and public coverage across Europe, Medicare doesn't pay for prescription drugs and offers poor catastrophic coverage. As a result, two-thirds of retirees need supplementary Medigap or employer-provided "wrap-around" policies that bring yearly out-of-pocket costs to $2,600. Meanwhile, the program's unmanaged fee-for-service care spawns excessive tests and procedures, while first-dollar Medigap coverage of copayments and deductibles sends folks racing to the doc because of a sniffle. Then there's Soviet-style central pricing, which once left Florida hospitals flooded with MRIs (by over-reimbursing for the machines after actual costs had dropped), while giving anesthesiologists (paid by the hour) a stake in keeping patients under.



Yet the least understood failing of Medicare today is its simple unfairness. In 1996, for example, Medicare spent more than $5,000 on each senior in California, Florida, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania; in Minnesota and Oregon, it spent $3,300. According to Dr. John Wennberg of Dartmouth Medical School, widely considered the nation's leading student of regional variations in health costs, only a tiny portion of these discrepancies can be explained by cost differences for supplies, wages, and the like. Instead, they're driven by local differences in the numbers of doctors and hospital beds and the associated "practice style" this creates—a self-interested case of supply driving demand. The effect has been to transform Medicare into a crazy quilt of indefensible—and, to taxpayers, invisible—cross-subsidies.

This inequity becomes clearest by looking at the way Medicare HMOs, now serving 17 percent of all beneficiaries, get paid. Despite paying lip service to reform in 1997, Congress left fees for these HMOs at 93.7 percent (down from 95 percent) of local per capita spending on fee-for-service Medicare, a formula that rewards towns like Miami and Los Angeles, where doctors historically have had a "when in doubt, do more" mentality. By eliminating excess, and then recruiting healthier, lower-cost seniors but still getting overpaid for them, these HMOs are able to offer extras like eyeglasses, dental care, and prescription drugs, and still make a killing. Everyone wins—except, of course, sicker seniors and those in counties where Medicare isn't overpaying, who, in effect, subsidize the lucky elderly.

For all the private sector's cheerleading about the market, of course, HMOs fiercely resist the competitive bidding (à la premium support) that would rationalize the system. In traditional fee-for-service Medicare, meanwhile, the amount of services and attention you get depends entirely on where you live. Perhaps because beneficiaries everywhere face identical premiums and deductibles, this variation in the actual benefits they receive hasn't caught fire politically. Most striking for the long-term-cost picture is that counties that spend three times more on Medicare as others do show no improvement in health.

Into this thicket comes premium support, versions of which have been pushed by such ideologically diverse gurus as Reischauer and his colleague Henry Aaron at the center-left Brookings Institution, Stuart Butler of the conservative Heritage Foundation, and Robert Helms at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute. Ordinarily, such a wonky consensus might be grounds for suspicion, but, after talking with 29 commission members, policy analysts, doctors, lobbyists, and White House and congressional aides, I'm convinced the plan's pluses outweigh its risks. Skipping over some mind-twisting complexities, the debate between "premium supporters" and suspicious liberals goes something like this:

Premium Supporter: Look, it's crazy to have the government setting prices for a $200 billion business. And, as a matter of politics and common sense, how can we justify having the entire working population in a modern managed care setting, only to regress to creaky old fee-for-service at the magic age of 65? We can fix those "four I's" with a dose of competition. And it's hardly a radical change. It's working for federal employees and their families. California public employees have it, too. Surely market forces will control costs better than the

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bureaucracy can. Plus, with this structure, it'll be easier to means-test the premium that wealthier seniors pay, freeing up money we can target for new benefits.

Suspicious Liberal: Isn't it funny how reasonable the devil can appear? Let's take costs. Medicare has done slightly better than the private sector in controlling them the past 30 years. Give the Health Care Financing Administration (or HCFA) the tools and it'll do even better. It's crazy that HCFA is barred from things every big private firm does—like using its purchasing clout to drive harder bargains and selectively contracting with key suppliers.

PS: But Medicare's the 800-zillion-pound gorilla! It's one thing to endorse businesslike practices but quite another to let Medicare's muscle put every medical supply firm out of business.

SL: You free-marketers love keeping Medicare hamstrung, don't you? If it performed well, your industry pals would take a hit. And think how inconvenient a well-performing government agency would be for your ideological prejudices.

PS: But, on your logic, the Pentagon would be free to arm-wrestle arms suppliers into bankruptcy. Since that would hurt national security, why would HCFA's pushing medical firms to the edge be good for health?

SL: Look, my real beef is that your scheme is destined to implode. Ten percent of the seniors account for 70 percent of the costs. Once some private plans cherry-pick the young and the healthy, the rest will be stuck with sicker, older patients and go bust.

PS: But we'll regulate their marketing practices—no more recruiting sessions on the third floor of walk-up buildings, where folks in wheelchairs can't go. And we'll adjust the premium the government pays each plan based on the health risk of the individual. That way, sicker seniors will have more dollars following them, making them just as attractive to health plans and ending cherry-picking in our time!

SL: On what planet? Is there any place where payments are successfully "risk adjusted" today?

PS: Well, no, but....

SL: There's a reason. It's an economist's pipe dream. And, once you've blown up today's system, and your risk adjustments go haywire, plans will go belly-up by the score, leaving seniors scrambling for coverage.

PS: That's really not likely.

SL: I'm gonna take your word? The truth is you're putting the entitlement at risk. You make nice noises now, but before long you'll cut the government contribution until it can't buy a decent benefit package. It's like welfare reform. You took away subsistence guarantees for poor kids the first chance you got. The same can happen to seniors.

PS: Calm down. There are lots more seniors than welfare kids. And they vote. Plus, if we make all insurers bid on the same basic benefit package (with extras available), they won't be able to use crafty benefit design to cherry-pick—like offering health clubs and greens' fees to draw fitter seniors.

SL: Yeah, but people who stay in fee-for-service (or FFS) get screwed by the math. If Uncle Sam's contribution is based on some blended average of FFS and cheaper new managed care plans, the FFS folks will get less than today. Millions who don't want to change their current arrangements—or who are just too confused and scared to plow through some thousand-page booklet of options—will have to pay more for the same benefits. So will folks in poor rural areas, where it's not worth it for health plans to compete with Medicare at all.

PS: But, assuming the folks who stay in traditional Medicare are sicker, the risk adjustment will raise the payments made on their behalf. Plus, we'll raise subsidies for poor seniors and make them easier to access. In general, though, if it does cost a little more for FFS, that's pretty much the idea. We want fewer people in plans that have no incentives to manage costs. That's how we got to 14 percent of GDP in the first place.

SL: If you think I'm gonna trust your lousy system to protect millions of widows living on $10,000 in Social Security from getting screwed, you're out of your mind. Maybe if the Democrats win Congress back and can control all the details, I'll consider it.

PS: Antique socialist!

SL: Industry pawn!

For a while, it looked as if the bipartisan commission on Medicare might actually break this impasse. At least a couple of the liberals warmed to the idea of premium support, assuming the government would expand all Medicare coverage to include prescription drugs, and assuming that there was a grandfather clause making sure seniors currently enrolled in fee-for-service plans could keep their current coverage without paying more. But further consensus proved elusive. And, while Congress will have a chance to move the debate forward in the next few years, it will do so only if it can get past the false choices both sides stress in the fight to frame the issue:

Markets vs. government. Sound bites aside, no one wants a "free market" in health care. With premium support, we'd replace Soviet-style price-setting with Soviet-style risk-adjusting, with health providers still trying to game the system to maximize income. Premium support also envisions a huge regulatory role for a powerful new Medicare Board to monitor health plans' marketing, finances, and quality. Remember: Even with the GOP behind it, it still owes a lot to Ira and Hillary.

Defined benefit vs. defined contribution. Liberals cry that Republicans want to "voucherize" Medicare, exposing poor seniors to heavy burdens if health costs rise faster than the vouchers' value. This charge was true—back in 1995. But even revolutionaries learn. After talking with many Republicans, I'm convinced that everyone seriously engaged in the debate wants a hybrid approach that assures the federal contribution can always buy a comprehensive benefit package. It's fair to fret that some in the GOP haven't really changed, but it doesn't matter what's in their hearts, only what's in legislation.

Trust fund "solvency." Nearly all talk of Medicare's woes involves the "solvency" of its "trust fund," set to go

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"broke" in 2008. One way to extend the life of a trust fund is to trim costs or raise taxes to keep projected revenues and expenses in sync. Another, however, is to cook the books, as Bill Clinton did with his latest Social Security proposal, a scheme he's also urged for Medicare.

It's a bipartisan temptation, of course. In 1997, Clinton and the GOP extended Medicare's "part A" hospital trust fund by seven years simply by declaring that certain expenses would now be accounted for in "part B" (funded mostly by general revenue). As these shenanigans suggest, defining the problem as one of restoring easily manipulated "solvency" precludes important questions of overall resource allocation. Is it wise or inevitable, for example, to let Medicare more than double to six percent of GDP at the expense of other social needs? The frustrating paradox of public finance has been that trust funds that benefit the elderly tacitly banish such questions, while being (at least until Clinton's brazen shell games) politically indispensable in forcing action that might help address them.

The fact is that liberals don't really have an alternative to premium support. They would just keep raising taxes and premiums, use the surplus to expand benefits, then come back to the crisis in ten years—which is no solution at all. And, while their concerns about the Breaux plan are not groundless, they are overblown. For example, when it comes to risk adjustment, success doesn't depend on scientific precision; it needs simply to be good enough to discourage health plans from cherry-picking. It's also possible to define a benefit package with enough detail to avoid the voucher worry and to include drugs in ways that don't bust the budget or bring HCFA price controls. There's already bipartisan support for a patients' bill of rights that would safeguard seniors while allowing innovations in delivery of care. And we can make sure needy seniors who stay in fee-for-service don't face unaffordable burdens.

But there's a rub. Even if you think premium support assigns government a role it is likely to perform better than it does central pricing, and even if competition seems indispensable for curing many of Medicare's inequities, it's probably not possible to have the right benefits, protect needy seniors, *and* bank savings. To be sure, Breaux's commission put out numbers showing premium support would shave cost growth by one percent a year, but its assumptions are dubious. Even advocates admit you can't feel confident about any savings. It's a matter of faith in the long-term impact of competition. We know the alternative—unmanaged fee-for-service, with the downsides of central pricing—can't be the answer. But, since one of the chief reasons to change Medicare is to control long-term costs, doesn't this make premium support senseless?

A few years ago, I would have probably said yes. Now, humbled by the difference between the results experts often expect from policy and what actually happens, I'm less certain and less worried. No one (least of all me, as a Clinton budget aide) thought the president's 1993 economic package would lead to today's stunning surpluses. Well, surprise. Perhaps the same lesson applies here. You push policy in the right direction, hope for the best, and come back and tweak if you need to. Even if savings do occur, Medicare accounts for only one in five dollars spent on health care, meaning that, if we stay on course to hit 19 percent of GDP by 2025, we'll almost certainly need a national assault on aggregate health spending a decade hence. Liberals, paradoxically, will need to lead that charge if they want government to have cash for any other social purpose. But maybe there's more important work to do first.

That work is universal coverage. Getting a premium support structure in place is the best hope to get there because it's easy to bring new people into this system, and it's the only model where Republicans will join the cause rather than resist it. As much as liberals might wish it, they're not going to persuade Republicans to outlaw the insurance industry and adopt a Canadian-style system. It's time liberals made peace with the notion that a regulated market of competing private health plans can be the vehicle for getting everyone covered. Yes, it means that, unlike other advanced countries, we'll have billions of "health" dollars siphoned off by middlemen and marketers. But, if liberals think of it as a jobs program, they'll learn to live with it. After all, billions in "school" spending now give a livelihood to countless unneeded bureaucrats. I haven't heard a liberal complaint.

"I see it as a step toward universal coverage" is the first answer Bob Kerrey gives when asked why he's for premium support. Republican Congressman Bill Thomas of California told me he plans to introduce a universal health bill this year that fits the managed competition approach. He'd sensibly scrap today's $100 billion tax exclusion on employer-provided health care, which gives the biggest subsidies to top executives, and reallocate these sums through tax credits tilted in favor of middle- and low-income citizens. Over time, he'd require individuals, not employers, to arrange their own coverage, using these means-tested tax credits to choose among competing local plans.

Unfortunately, this pragmatic and progressive vision is either beyond the ken of liberals or has been lost in their thirst to use Medicare to win in 2000. Depressed Republicans say Clinton's no-hard-choices call for a new drug benefit funded by the surplus may be unbeatable politics, especially paired with the time-tested charge that the GOP wants to slash Medicare to fund tax cuts for the rich. The hopeful scenario is that Clinton somehow heals the wounds of the failed commission, unites his party behind a Medicare deal in the next six months, and then comes back to bash the GOP. The president says he'll offer his own plan soon, and White House aides insist Clinton wants a bill, not an issue. But the split between liberal and centrist Democrats on Medicare may make the lure of unity for 2000 more appealing than the trials of writing laws—and actually achieving liberal dreams. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Class Struggles

A week in Iceland in 1972 was full of surprises, most of them pleasant. Particularly pleasant was the country's attitude toward the theater. The National Theater in Reykjavik, the only professional company, was well-supported and did admirable work; and the amateur theaters, in various towns, were given some subsidy, engaged professional directors from abroad, and did productions that were held to high standards.

Film, indigenous film, was a rarity. (I saw only one picture while I was there, *M*A*S*H*. I had already seen it at home, but in Reykjavik it had Icelandic subtitles and I wanted the experience. I got it: long speeches—in English, of course—accompanied by only three or four Icelandic words in a subtitle. Still, the audience laughed a lot. Maybe many of them knew English.) Inevitably the situation has changed since 1972. Iceland now has a film industry, even if only a small one, and that industry has joined the world community by having severe money troubles, just like its bigger brothers elsewhere.

The leader of the film community is a 44-year-old director named Fridrik Thor Fridriksson. Fridrik—in Iceland everyone is called by his or her first name and is so listed in the phone book—has some international reputation. An earlier film of his, *Cold Fever*, which I missed, was shown here recently, and now comes **Devil's Island** (Artistic License).

The title doesn't refer to the French penal colony but to Fridrik's homeland. Based on a novel by Einar Karason, who adapted it himself, the picture is more interesting as an example of a global phenomenon than otherwise. Many, many countries have, so to speak, made this film. For instance, a New Zealand picture called *Once Were Warriors* dealt with a Maori family living in slum conditions outside Auckland and was a drama of cultural transition, if not deterioration. *Devil's Island* informs the world that Iceland is not lagging behind in class struggles.

Set in the 1950s, *Devil's Island* presents Icelandic families living in Quonset huts outside Reykjavik, huts that were once U.S. Army barracks and are now being used to house the local poor. At the start a U.S. Army officer is marrying an Icelandic woman and taking her back to the States. The film is streaked throughout with references to the U.S., especially the music, especially Elvis Presley. Dreams of America haunt the younger folk. Twenty years after this era, I was told that what Icelandic people resented most about the U.S. military bases was the American influence on pure Icelandic language and culture, and *Devil's Island* gives us a dollop of that influence taking hold.

The characters are a predictable assortment, featuring a discontented, hard-drinking young man who has visited America and comes home lacquered with American pop. Now he does little but hang out with layabout friends and get in trouble, much to the dismay of his religious grandma and hardworking grandpa. Nothing that happens in the film is greatly moving or interesting, other than the fact that Fridrik and colleagues felt that this Icelandic version of international class alteration needed to be made.

Two aspects, however, are remarkable. First, the cinematography by Ari Kristinsson. (Every Icelandic male's surname consists of his father's first name followed by "son," every female's surname is her father's first name followed by "dottir." Thus a brother and sister have different surnames—but they are called by their first names anyway!) Ari catches so exactly the leaden skies and general slushiness in the slum area that after a while my socks began to feel damp. And the actors are all better than competent. I remembered the Icelandic theater productions I had seen and recognized that, in this minuscule country so jealous of its culture, a long-nurtured tradition of good acting had apparently just been waiting for a film industry to begin.

Metroland (Lions Gate) is another tale that is often retold in different places. A man, after some wild-oat younger years, settles down into a patterned life; then someone from the past reappears to tug at the pattern. In this screenplay by Adrian Hodge, derived from a Julian Barnes novel, the setting is a London suburb known by the sobriquet Metroland—a place where people who work in the city come home by Metro to sleep. The odd aspect of the film is that, though we quickly realize we have seen this story before, it's being done so intelligently that we're enjoying it. We are even admiring the courage of the filmmakers in taking on such a familiar tale.

Chris is a photographer in an ad agency, married to Marion; they have a small daughter and a smallish house in a tree-lined street. Suddenly Toni appears,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Dreamlife of Angels. *Two twenty-year-old French women perceived with sympathy and candor. (Reviewed 3/22/99)* **The Harmonists.** *The (relatively) true story of a German six-man singing group, three of them Jewish, as Hitler arrives. A piece of marzipan in a forbidding shape. (3/29/99)* **The Last Days.** *A documentary about five Hungarian survivors of the Holocaust. Done with restraint. (3/8/99)* **Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels.** *Light-fingered gang war in London's East End. Cockney and comic. (4/5/99)*—**SK**

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Books.

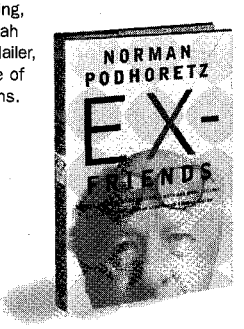
[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

Private Lives, Public Figures

EX-FRIENDS

by Norman Podhoretz

Podhoretz takes us back to a time when the finest minds of a generation regularly gathered to debate one another with a fluency and passion almost extinct. With wit, piercing insight and startling honesty, he introduces us to Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt and Norman Mailer, revealing the brilliance of these intellectual icons. (The Free Press)



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A COVERT LIFE: JAY LOVESTONE

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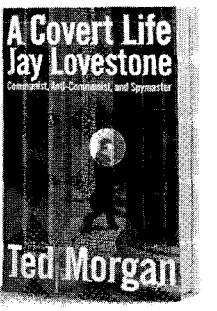

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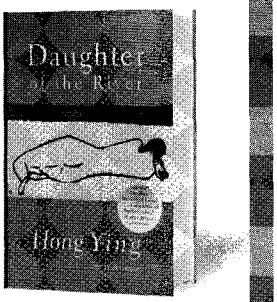

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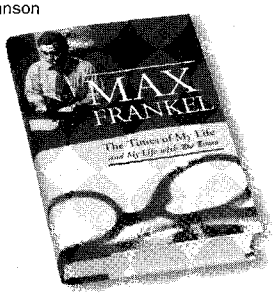

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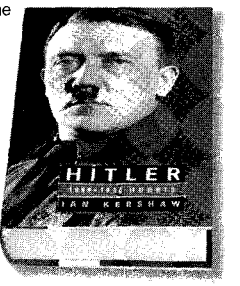

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a writer who was a close pal during the Paris days when Chris was trying to be an independent photographic artist. Almost immediately Toni tries to pry Chris loose from his bourgeois self-classification. Chris begins to think a lot about the Paris days—rendered in delicately muted colors by the cinematographer, Jean-François Robin—especially about his Parisian girlfriend, Annick. The Annick sequences are exactly what such an experience should be, especially in memory. But the film doesn't load the dice: Chris's wife, Marion, is herself a quick-witted, attractive woman who knows exactly what Toni is up to. She tells Chris that Toni is determined to get him away because he's jealous of Chris and wants to reduce his friend to his own poeticized vagabond status. The finish is insidiously satisfying.

The least successful performance is by Lee Ross as Toni: he conveys little of the appeal that might make one want to knock around the world with him. Christian Bale does all that is wanted as Chris, a man who values what he is accomplishing in an orderly world without becoming stuffy about it. Elsa Zylberstein is exactly the Parisian lover that any sensible man would want when he is not being quite sensible. The revelation of the film is Emily Watson as Marion. Those who are used to her in unbalanced characters—as in *Breaking the Waves* and *Hilary and Jackie*—may be especially gratified to see that when she "acts" less, she acts better. Watson keeps the wife warmly companionable without being in the least smug.

The director, Philip Saville, apparently had a beneficial effect on all these performances (though Ross is miscast), but I'd bet that he had little influence on John Wood—because none was needed. Wood, whose acting always makes me think of a first-class surgeon doing a delicate operation with precision and pride, has a small part, two scenes as a retired commuter whom Chris encounters on a train just as the younger man is wondering about the future of his own commuting. Wood has that very day left his office for the last time after forty-two years in the job and is taking home the farewell gift from his firm, a whiskey decanter. "Forty-two years," he says with dry rue, "and they hadn't even noticed that I never drink." Yes, I've given the line away, but wait until you hear Wood speak it. •

Jed Perl on Art

Q.E.D.

The reflections on art that Clement Greenberg put down on paper in the later decades of his life are blunt to the point of provocation and sweeping in their implications, yet even the most skeptical reader will be pulled in by their beautifully paced conversational tone. This critic is a prodigy of self-assurance. As Greenberg discusses what makes the greatest art great, his comparisons and his arguments exhibit a sovereign obliviousness to the possibility that a reader might have legitimate qualms or objections. In the series of eight essays on questions of artistic taste, judgment, and experience that he published in the 1970s, Greenberg's rhetorical confidence combines a brainy adolescent's flair for take-no-prisoners declarations, the seen-it-all-before pose of a cheerfully serene man of the world, and a hermit's cranky and ingenious obtuseness.

Clement Greenberg died five years ago, at the age of 85. By now his reputation looks unsettled in ways that are not at all unusual in the first couple of decades after the passing of a figure who has had a vast intellectual impact. In his later years, Greenberg would still plunge into the rapid-fire talk at openings and parties, and his drinks and his unfiltered cigarettes were still giving him the rush he needed to believe that he was besting all opponents and winning every point. His presence was energizing. He never stopped engaging with art and ideas in what many of his younger interlocutors regarded as a feverish, rough-edged, New-York-Jew-of-the-'30s way; and when you talked to him you often discovered that the old arguments and the new arguments were basically the same. Whether you agreed with Greenberg or not, his vehemence left no room for nostalgia.

Intellectuals who go down still fighting have a way of leaving confusion in their wake, and for now Greenberg's tautly plotted, ferociously single-minded essays seem to count for less than people's muddled impressions of the man. While the times of his life are regarded as full of period color, his writings are beginning to gather dust on the library shelves. This spring a new collection of Greenberg's late uncollected work is appearing, and it will be interesting to see how people react. *Homemade Esthetics: Observations on Art and Taste* (Oxford University Press, 220 pp., $30), which has been edited by Janice Van Horne Greenberg, the writer's widow, brings together these eight essays on aesthetics from the '70s and a good deal of other material. Although the book is not exactly a last will and testament, these eight essays—which offer as obdurate, streamlined, and unsentimental a view of art-for-art's-sake as the world has ever known—do have a valedictory power.

Greenberg was only in his sixties when he did most of the work collected in *Homemade Esthetics*, yet like Eliot, whose ideas about the impersonality of tradition are echoed here, he had a way of sounding middle-aged when he was young and old when he was middle-aged. In any event, Greenberg did not publish very much in the '80s and '90s. So we are to some extent justified, as we read Greenberg's spare and deftly designed essays, in feeling that we are watching this tough-guy aesthete as he works out the precise dimensions of his ivory tower for the very last time. I don't much like what he is building, but the process is certainly fascinating.

Homemade Esthetics combines essays with transcriptions of taped lectures and question-and-answer sessions, and so the book as a whole leaves Greenberg's thought looking stale and unfocused—more like a time capsule than a statement of principle. In 1970, Greenberg was invited to give a series of talks on aesthetics at Bennington College, where some of the faculty had long been sympathetic to his views, and where he had organized shows and appeared in various capacities. Greenberg gave nine seminars in April 1971, and these became the basis for the essays that he polished and published over the next eight years (generally under the titles "Seminar One," "Seminar Two," and so forth). In the new volume, these essays that Greenberg extracted from his experiences at Bennington are followed by more than 100 pages of transcribed tapes of the actual sessions at the college, and the effect is to muffle, to blur, and even to muzzle the hard-edged force of this master stylist. When you compare the tapes with the essays (which have been retitled for this collection), you see exactly how much hard labor it takes to create an off-the-cuff prose.

There are some interesting moments in the Bennington question-and-answer

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sessions, but even these more or less friendly encounters tend to underscore a wearisome picture of Greenberg as a cool arbiter and a fierce combatant—more drinks, more cigarettes, more debating-team one-upsmanship. In his earlier years he was known to take a swing at people who rubbed him the wrong way. He never stopped cultivating his reputation as the guy who would always have the last word, but I suspect that he would be disturbed that he is mostly remembered as a man who was good at throwing around his intellectual weight. And those who were once on the receiving end are now quite content to regard him as *their* punching-bag.

In the universities, where the very idea of the freestanding value of a work of art is, by and large, viewed with incredulity, Greenberg today has a striking, almost awesome negative fascination, all the more so because at the beginning of his career he had the temerity to imagine that art-for-art's-sake might be a kind of Marxist idea. In the art world, where he spent years keeping his arguments simple and supporting an increasingly circumscribed kind of abstract painting and sculpture, he is regarded as little more than a handy cliché. If Norman Rockwell stands for "kitsch," Clement Greenberg stands for "formalism," and it hardly seems to matter that formalism was not a word that he used very much, if at all.

This is not to say that there aren't artists, critics, curators, collectors, and historians who still have complicated positive feelings about the man and his work. But even the people who take Greenberg very much to heart find their allegiances frayed, and view the mention of his work as an intellectual minefield to be approached with caution. Greenberg may be the most badly tarnished idol in American art. The fascination of the essays in *Homemade Esthetics* is that they give us a chance to see how much light was actually given off by the man's thinking, at least in the later decades of his life.

Greenberg's essays are constructed with a few grandly bold strokes, and the question for the reader is to what extent this pared-down account accurately represents our experience of works of art. Greenberg himself never felt that he had quite gotten to the core of the matter. This book contains a ninth, previously unpublished, and rather ill-focused installment of the Seminar series. An appendix to the book contains still another attempt at an introductory chapter. And the book's wonderful (and entirely accurate) title comes from a yet earlier stab at a book on this theme. However Greenberg would have ultimately presented his argument, we can safely say that it would have been in terms of ever greater concision. His essential idea is that our experience of a work of art is irreducible and unanalyzable. And his stark language gives eloquent expression to his stern, uncompromising views.

"Intuition" is the idea with which Greenberg begins. He offers a few dictionary definitions, with the general idea of linking intuition to the values of directness and immediacy. He then argues that "the intuition that gives you the color of the sky turns into an esthetic intuition when it stops telling you what the weather is like and becomes purely an experience of the color." Aesthetic experience, Greenberg explains, is "cognitiveness-without-cognition." It is "the experiencing of experience." This experience is absolutely freestanding; it keeps turning in on itself; judgment and sensation are one. The experience of art, he elaborates, "is perceived and accepted for its own immediate sake; not at all for what it might signify in terms of anything other than itself as an intuition in the present; not at all for its consequences; not at all for what it might mean to you in your particular self or to anyone else in his or her particular self; not at all for the bearing it might have on your interests or anyone else's interests."

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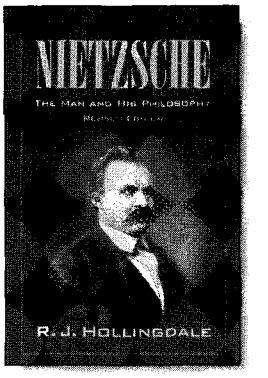

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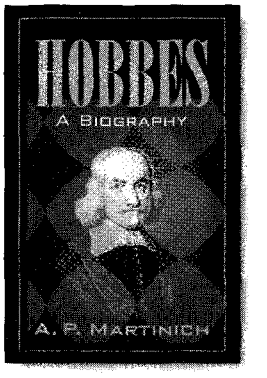

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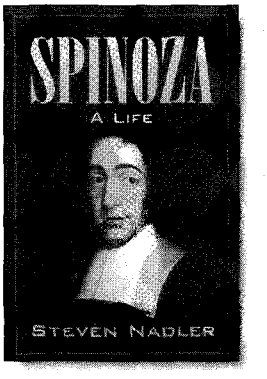

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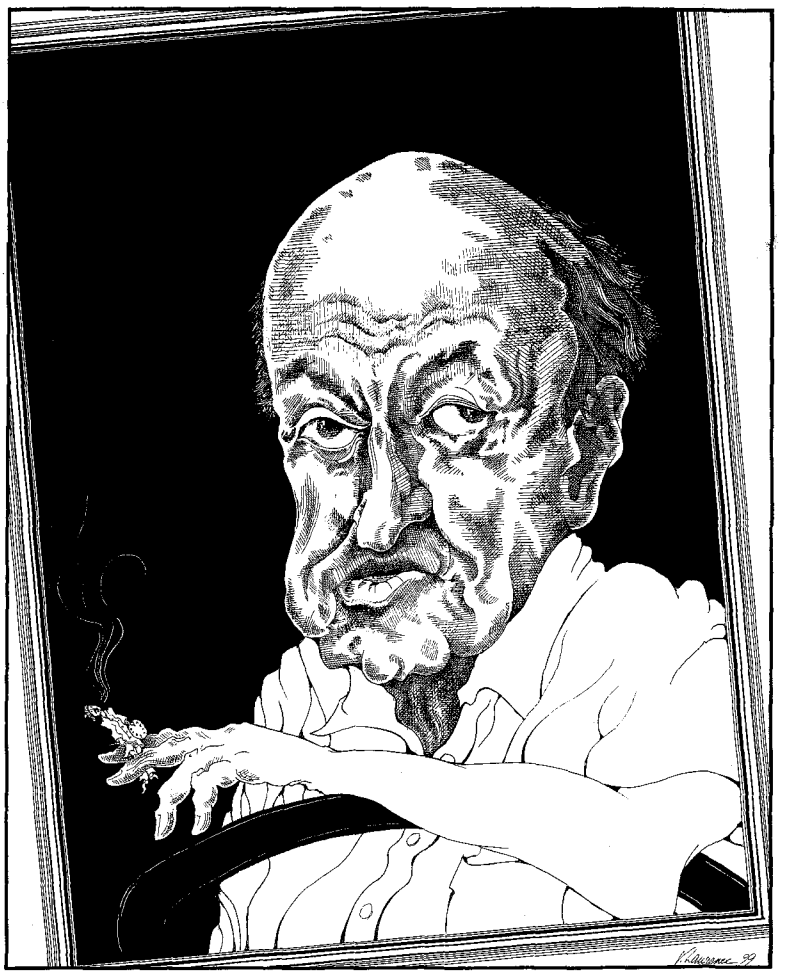
From essay to essay, Greenberg returns to this belief that all the arts are dedicated to an experience that is isolated, self-reflexive, sufficient unto itself. He emphasizes the visual arts, but he maintains that his conclusions hold for literature and music as well, and several of the examples that he lingers over come from writers. The third essay focuses on taste. Tradition is a theme in the fourth. The fifth deals with the vantage point of the artist, whose working processes—what Greenberg calls "judgment-decisions"—are seen as self-contained in ways that mirror the experience of the viewer. The essays tend to weave their way back to a couple of basic principles, so that in each instance we are left with the same broad, unified effect. They have a variations-on-a-theme quality that recalls the reiteration of motifs that you find in certain groups of paintings by the artists whom Greenberg admired—say, Barnett Newman or Clyfford Still. The essays have their own kind of all-overness, like a literary version of a Pollock arabesque. At one point, Greenberg announces: "To say it still again: art lives in the experiencing of it. And yet again: that experiencing consists in valuing, esthetic valuing."

I agree with Greenberg that great works of art take us out of the flux of life, and on the rare occasions in these essays when he writes about particular works that he loves, you feel the sensitivity of his responses. (He zeroes in on the paradoxical core of *The Golden Bowl* when he explains that we cannot help but be more sympathetic to the outsmarted lovers than to the rich American girl, Maggie Verver, whom James, at least on the surface, seems to so admire.) Greenberg's mind is far too active ever to quite submit to his own isolationist view of art. He is obviously excited by the prospect of engaging with others who have thought long and hard about these subjects. For stretches the essays have a pleasurably speculative and even quirky appeal. Greenberg will bring in something that he has encountered in Benedetto Croce or Susanne Langer, as one might in the course of a conversation. Yet when he comes to his dramatically sweeping conclusions, it is difficult not to feel that they are erected on too narrow a base. Taken as a whole, the Seminars look jerry-built: a grand, rickety construction.

The philosopher who comes up most often in the Seminars is Kant, and at least initially there is something appealing about Greenberg's awestruck reactions to the *Critique of Judgment*. Readers with a background in philosophy may feel that the Seminars are little more than a few jazzy riffs on Kantian themes; but even those who believe that Greenberg has something altogether his own to say will begin by acknowledging that he carries us back to Kant. There is the same sense of art as being comprehended only in the experiencing, of the experience as having no significance outside of the experiencing, of the experiencing as being a union of pleasure and judgment, of the pleasure as being inextricably tied to the inevitability of the judgment. Like Kant, Greenberg seems to regard all of this as being at once utterly mysterious and crystal clear. But the centuries that separate them, in artistic matters as in so much else, change the whole tenor of the argument. If Kant's aesthetics exude an early morning beauty, Greenberg's suggest something closer to a twilight strangeness.

As he labored over the Seminars all through the 1970s, Greenberg must have been haunted by a feeling that the general level of contemporary art was sinking lower with each passing day. The very idea of artistic judgment seemed to be on the verge of extinction. In the sixth Seminar he complains that "what is relatively new about the badness of recent 'advanced' art ... is that it is so boring and vacuous." And he credits this to the fact "that so many of the decisions that go into the supposedly newest art go by default, become automatic, and by the same token arbitrary, decisions." Greenberg has a response to this increasingly anarchic situation, which he sees both among the people who are making the work and the people who are looking at it. He believes that if you embrace an intuitive freedom with sufficient determination, you will find that there are things that are inevitably right—and inevitably wrong—in art.

There was certainly enough phony experimentation going on in the art world of the 1970s to justify Greenberg's disgust, but the belligerence with which he embraces Kantian ideas in these later essays is untrue to the eighteenth-century optimism that probably attracted him in the first place. What is speculative in Kant becomes curmudgeonly in Greenberg, and this makes all the difference in the world. For Kant, aesthetics are part of a vast architectural framework through which he explores the possibilities of the mind. He rejects the rulebook of neoclassicism in favor of a view that Isaiah Berlin characterized in his Mellon Lectures on *The Roots of Romanticism* (the lectures have just been published by Princeton University Press) as that of a "restrained romantic." For Kant, the very empiricism of artistic judgments can ultimately suggest a freer—and therefore a more permanent and universal—kind of classic power. To the enigma of how the most personal



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and singular experiences of art can be felt to have universal inevitability, Kant gives several not entirely consistent answers. At least for a time, he seems to leave open the possibility of lively debate among contradictory views as to whose judgment of taste has an "exemplary validity." But such openness is impossible for Greenberg. He lives in an art world so dominated by phony judgments, and non-judgments and anti-judgments, that he can only believe that there is the universal or there is nothing.

Greenberg allows a little light and air to circulate through his essays, but finally the man's intellectual agility underscores the relentlessly self-limiting nature of his view. We have to take Greenberg seriously, I think, when he explains that "esthetic judgment—esthetic intuition—closets you with itself and with yourself." Elsewhere he explains that it does not matter what an aesthetic experience "mean[s] to you in your particular self or to anyone else in his or her particular self." Reading statements such as these, it is easy to see Greenberg's historical angle. He feels that he is exulting in a great modern revelation, namely that there are forces in art that transcend the particulars of an image, so that a Madonna and a Buddha can have a related impact.

In the last Seminar that he completed, Greenberg keeps returning to Mondrian's *Fox Trot A* (1929), a diamond-shaped painting in which three black lines break through the placidity of a white expanse, creating a buoyant contrapuntal mood. This gorgeously concise painting, Greenberg writes, is "as empty a picture as could be imagined short of a completely monochromatic one. Yet it works, it succeeds, and does so on the highest level." Greenberg is not wrong to see in *Fox Trot A* a thrilling ultimate distillation of particulars into universals. By allowing the Seminars to near their conclusion on this note, however, he exposes his tendency to give the entire experience of art an unnecessarily stripped-down look—a look that Mondrian himself did not see as definitive, if we consider the increasingly elaborated and even downright metaphorical paintings of his later years.

In these essays Greenberg insists that hard-won individual judgments can trump and transcend any artistic idea, whether academic or anti-academic, but he seems afraid of the implications of the freedom that he preaches. Beginning with a recoil from Dadaist self-indulgence—a perfectly understandable recoil, in my opinion—he ends up backing away from the ultra-personal concept of image and style that gives modern art its awesome variety. The essential problem with Greenberg's aesthetic is that it fails to account for what individuals, whether artists or spectators, bring to the aesthetic experiences that mean so much to him.

Greenberg believes that our experience of a work of art has nothing to do with "desire or fear, wishing or unwishing. (Because it deals too much in wish-fulfillment, daydreaming provides little genuine esthetic experience.)" He is saying that an experience of art has nothing to do with a person's particular needs or doubts or appetites. In part he wishes to combat the philistine's art-is-whatever-you-think-it-is argument. In doing so, however, he overlooks the extent to which the range of art has everything to do with the ways that artists respond to and extend their daydreams and their desires. Of course art is an objectification, but a part of what is objectified is our appetites. Art gives our fantasies an indissoluble form.

Greenberg thinks forcefully, and he is very deft at pulling us into the logic of his argument. But there are issues that he will flick off as if they count for nothing, when in fact they go to the heart of the matter. At one point he argues for the "unanimity . . . the ultimate objectivity of taste"—which is his way of proving that we don't bring private desires into art—

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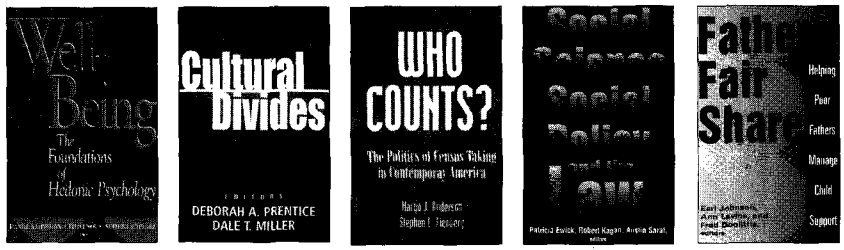

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and then he hastens to add that whatever "disagreements" remain are "only about ranking." He gives an example of one of these disagreements: "Is Mozart or Beethoven the better composer?" But this only becomes an interesting question when we push beyond the ranking game. I would say that it is when we begin to wonder why one great artist moves us more (or differently) than another that we can no longer separate aesthetic experience from the singularity of our desires. Mozart versus Beethoven is a question of differences in temperament and character, in texture and shading. And who's to say that Mozart versus Beethoven is the end of it? Questions of taste and judgment really get exciting when a friend begins to argue—convincingly—that there are qualities in Rossini or Tchaikovsky that move him more (or differently) than anything in Mozart. You don't want to live without *Don Giovanni*; but you might not want to live without *Il Viaggio a Reims* either.

There is a debilitating homogeneity to Greenberg's view of art. He says that there is "no such thing as *intellectual* art." True, no artist can create out of intellect alone. But don't we all know what we mean when we say that Poussin created transcendent intellectual art? We mean that he had a passion for systems, theories, narratives, and myths, and that these passions gave his work a labyrinthine kind of poetic vigor. Titian is not an intellectual artist, at least not in this sense. This kind of distinction is significant. It ought not be swept aside.

Of course, Greenberg was far too absorbed in the arts not to know that there is a dizzying complexity to the greatest creations; he admits as much in his account of *The Golden Bowl*. In the Seminars, though, he tends to regard the mystery of art as yet another orthodoxy—as a monolithic effect that is the same in each work. There is a coarseness—an academic coarseness—about his feeling for the magic of art. There is also an irony here. Like so many of the artists and writers with whom he disagreed and argued endlessly in the 1960s and '70s, Greenberg seems to regard the contemporary artistic situation as a spectacle in which nobody is much more than a puppet, guided by forces beyond their control. With Greenberg, quality is the force that transcends personality and history; but when he seeks to confirm his taste by citing a consensus that develops through the generations and the centuries, his visionary historical determinism brings to mind nothing so much as the Hegelian and Marxist ideas that had enthralled intellectuals in his youth. Greenberg's self-aggrandizing historicism has a demagogic '30s aura, because of course it is left to Greenberg, who knows quality when he sees it, to draw the line from the past to the present and the future.

"The objectivity of taste," Greenberg announces, "is probatively demonstrated in and through the presence of a consensus *over time*." I wonder if the consensus of taste is really so objective, even over time. I was struck, in one of Greenberg's lists of greats, which includes Dante, Masaccio, Palestrina, Milton, and Wagner, to find Watteau. I cannot think of any painter who means more to me than Watteau, and I'm glad that Greenberg likes his canvases, too. But the power of Watteau's art rests in so oddly piquant a combination of steely delicacy and hyper-lucid improvisation that it quite understandably strikes some people as much less than transcendent. And I would not say that they are, on their own terms, wrong. Once, after I had written effusively about Watteau, a painter said to me, incredulously: "You wrote about Watteau as if he were Piero." I said that I thought Watteau was that good, and my friend just shook his head. This exchange is a good example of the extent to which, at the level where experiences of art really matter, they are *not* absolute. They are conditioned by all kinds of personal tastes—whether we crave the idealized order of Piero or the improvised order of Watteau. Only people who take it for granted that there is such a thing as quality can really begin to discuss their points of agreement and disagreement, but the more interesting these discussions become, the farther they will probably range from an ultimate, seamless analysis.

By the time that Clement Greenberg was composing these Seminars, his most active period as a critic was far behind him. In that earlier phase of his career, roughly from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s, he had been a man bewitched by particulars. You feel those particulars in the essays that he gathered in *Art and Culture* in 1961, as well as in the four volumes of collected criticism and in the brief studies of Miró, Matisse, and Hans Hofmann. In these prodigious writings, we see Greenberg looking very closely; we know that his thoughts about structure and style and countless other matters are drawn directly from the careful scrutiny of works of art. In the later essays, however, everything has changed. We find Greenberg looking at almost nothing. There are very few works of art mentioned in the eight essays in *Homemade Esthetics*. Basically, he reaches for a few great names.

This move from the particular to the general is not all that unusual among writers about the arts, and it is not really difficult to understand. After spending a number of years confronting the work of a wide variety of artists, a critic can begin to feel that the newer work that he is seeing is not extending his sensibility so much as forcing him back to a relatively restricted range of responses. It is possible that in his later essays Greenberg felt that he was articulating the core beliefs that had guided him in his years as a practicing critic; and he was certainly returning to some questions that had interested him in early and expansively theoretical essays such as "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" and "Towards a Newer Laocoon." But the result in the Seminars is a hybrid that is neither philosophy nor criticism. Greenberg wants his readers to recognize what is most immediate and essential in a work of art, but these late arguments seem to be fueled by nothing so much as his demoralized response to what he believes art has become.

Strangely enough, the Seminars also fail to account for the impact of criticism itself, at least the impact of criticism when it is practiced with the fullness of feeling that Greenberg had achieved in the 1940s. In response to what he sees as the critical and artistic failures of the times in which he lives, Greenberg conceives a cycle of essays that is designed to exist out-of-time. I cannot imagine anything that would have been of less use in the 1970s—a decade when the art world needed not more sweeping generalizations, but more of the daringly immediate analysis that is the mark of first-rate criticism.

Critics account for the impact of artistic experiences by unpacking those experiences for the readers. The critic undergoes a process of self-analysis, a process that has meaning for the reader because it is based on the study of particulars that are outside of the critic—primarily, of course, the particulars of works of art, but also the particulars of their reception. Writing becomes a way of decoding and opening up the arts. The revelations in criticism arise, as they do in art itself, from the particulars. You see this in Greenberg's work of the 1940s, as he watches painting move from the easel to the wall. You see this in Vasari, three centuries earlier, as he looks at Titian's late canvases and realizes that painterly abstractness can yield a new kind of verisimilitude. Insights emerge as old assumptions are revised in the light of new experiences.

What is so startling about *Homemade Esthetics* is to see how far Greenberg moved from even the appetite for such revelations. Greenberg's conclusions are

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predetermined: they come at the beginning of the book. And when a man who has made a name for himself by writing about particular works of art begins to erect a freestanding aesthetic, there may be an implicit criticism of the ad-hoc nature of art criticism itself.

In a sense, you can't blame Greenberg for bowing out of criticism. He had already produced dozens of the most beautifully shaped essays that any American has ever written about the arts. Who can ask for more? Artists who had Greenberg in their studios during his later years may contend that he was still open to new experiences, yet for a man who surely counted on being remembered for what he had written, his gathering silence in print has to be taken seriously. Confronted with an art world that in the late '60s and '70s had to a large degree embraced a Dadaist skepticism about all matters of taste, quality, and judgment, Greenberg seized many opportunities to speak out in public; but when it came to his writing, he evinced an increasingly Bartlebyesque preference for not saying a thing.

No one can doubt that in his later decades Greenberg was still awed by works of art, and there remain interesting essays from those years that have not been collected—an interpretation of Indian sculpture, a report on a visit to Ireland. But in these later writings the masterpieces begin to blur together. There is something creepy about the abstractness of Greenberg's judgments; he is dehumanizing art. Behind the conversational tone lurks a vatic personality. I can understand Greenberg's desire to bring the discussions that we are always having about art to some definitive conclusion—and then, triumphantly, write Q.E.D. But is this the kind of thinking that really holds us when we are confronting works of art? When I look for a critic who can guide me through the 1960s and '70s I turn to Fairfield Porter and John Ashbery before Clement Greenberg. With Porter and Ashbery, there is a willingness to take the risk of enthusiasms that are partial or peculiar, and see where they go. There is a respect for contrasts and differences, for going where the art leads. You can call these men pluralists or hedonists. What counts is that they follow their eyes and their instincts.

I am offended by Greenberg's tendency to run roughshod over distinctions. And yet there is something in his voice that remains true to those times when we are dumbstruck by the grandeur of a work of art, when a painting or a poem contains so much that we wonder if anything that we say can convey the experience. In *Homemade Esthetics*, we hear the voice of a man who has been stung by art, and who must explain why certain paintings and poems and novels mean so much to him. He is determined to get it right. He will not be fooled. And his obsession with some ultimate truth becomes the grand folly that haunts these later essays.

Greenberg is a spectacle of egomaniacal self-abnegation. There is something strangely magnificent about the way he drives the same few points home, again and again. In one of the Seminars, he complains about the Dadaist idea that "art can do without taste." The elegant sparring that follows is something that Greenberg did better than anybody who has ever written about art:

> Art can do without taste—I hear voices from as far back as 1913 saying this. What they mean, without knowing it, is that art can do without art; that is, art can do without offering the satisfactions that art alone can offer. That's what art's doing without taste really means. Well, if the satisfactions exclusive to art are dispensable, why bother with art at all? We can go on to something else. (And there are, after all, things more valuable than art, as I myself would always insist.) But meanwhile we're talking about art.

And so we are. •

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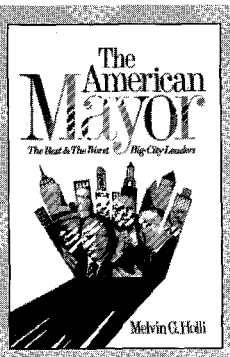

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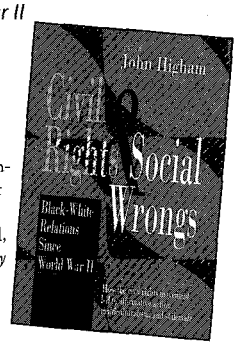

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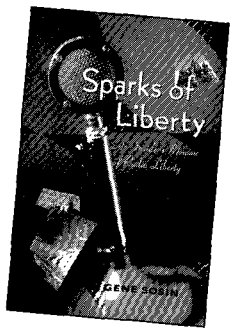

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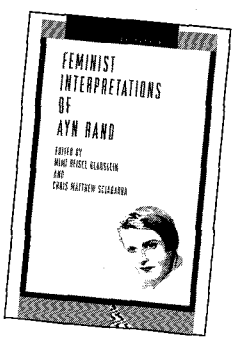

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The aging of America and the reinvention of retirement.

Off Golden Pond

BY ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

I.

I am 53, and so I am in the vanguard of one of the most profound—and possibly fearsome—social changes in our history: the aging of America. Until 1980, the United States was a country of the young. The median age had hardly ever exceeded 30, meaning that half of the population was younger than 30 and half was older. For most of the nineteenth century, the median age was 20 or less. Between 1940 and 1980, it fluctuated within a narrow band between 28 and 30. Barring some calamity that devastates the elderly, we shall almost certainly never see 30 again. In 1997, the median age was nearly 35, and under plausible assumptions it will approach 39 by 2030. In later years, it could go higher.

Almost everyone is aware of these trends, which reflect lengthening life expectancy and declining birth rates. In 1950, those 65 and over were only 8 percent of the population, and they were a quarter the size of the 20-and-under group (34 percent). Even today, the 65-and-overs (13 percent) are less than half the 20-and-unders (29 percent). By 2030, however, applying those same plausible assumptions, the two groups will be roughly equal. Those 65 and over will be about 20 percent, compared with 24 percent for those 20 and under.

We all know that this change is coming, and yet we have done little—as a nation—to prepare for it; and we have only dimly contemplated what it means for our politics, our economy, and the character of our society. We imagine the future mostly as an extension of the present. All we need to do is to save more as individuals and, somehow, to ensure the survival of Social Security and Medicare, the main federal programs that support older Americans. With these precautions, we members of the baby boom can expect to retire in our early or middle 60s and proceed to enjoy our "golden years." Yet the future may not be an extension of the present. More important, the future must not be an extension of the present.

What we have done is to encourage people to retire at younger and younger ages—with vast public subsidies—even though they are healthier than ever and live longer than ever. Retirement has evolved from a short and necessary evil—a period in which people could no longer work and earn their way—into a sanctioned and cherished reward: a time to relax and to savor the pleasures of family, travel, hobbies, and leisure. For half a century, government policy and social custom have encouraged this increasingly sharp demarcation between "work" and "retirement." This may have made sense when people were sicker and life expectancy was shorter. But now it surely does not make sense; and if it is perpetuated, it may deaden the economy, poison politics, and breed nasty social resentments.

Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America—and the World
by Peter G. Peterson
(Times Books, 280 pp., $23)

The Evolution of Retirement: An American Economic History, 1880-1990
by Dora L. Costa
(University of Chicago Press, 234 pp., $40)

Long-Term Budgetary Pressures and Policy Options
Congressional Budget Office
(Government Printing Office, 67 pp., $7)

Successful Aging: The MacArthur Foundation Study
by John W. Rowe and Robert L. Kahn
(Pantheon, 265 pp., $24.95)

We are, for starters, mortgaging our future. In their present form, Social Security, Medicare, and other government programs for the elderly will become hugely expensive for tomorrow's workers. The costs are so large that they threaten slowly to subordinate almost everything else that the federal government does—from national defense to national parks—to the need to pay for retirement programs. The Congressional Budget Office has done projections. They are only crude guesses, and they are subject to all the usual uncertainties about the future; but because they are based on fairly firm population trends, the basic outline is not mere speculation. And the numbers are sobering.

In 1998, the federal government spent 20 percent of national income (Gross Domestic Product), and the budget was roughly in balance. A third of spending already goes to the two largest programs for older Americans, Social Security and Medicare (health insurance for the 65-and-overs). The CBO projects their costs to almost double by 2030—from 7 percent of GDP now to 12 percent of GDP. Nor is that all. Medicaid—the federal-state health care program for the poor—now pays for almost 40 percent of all nursing-home care. With more people in nursing homes, Medicaid is projected to double from 1 to 2 percent of GDP by 2030. Probably half or more of this would go for the elderly.

So, put very crudely, we will spend about 13 percent of our national income on older Americans in a few decades. At present spending levels, this would be about two thirds of the budget. These projections could be optimistic; they presume that health costs come under control and that Congress does not pass new benefits for retirees. Even so, conflicts are unavoidable under highly favorable assumptions. Let's assume that the world remains a pretty safe place for Americans and that defense spending stays at 3 percent of GDP, its lowest level since 1940. Let's also assume that, over the next 15 years, we use budget surpluses to repay the publicly-held federal debt of $3.7 trillion. This helps, because interest on the debt now costs us about 3 percent of GDP.

Where does this leave us? Well, three quarters of the budget goes to defense, retirement programs, and Medicaid. That is about 17 percent of GDP. The rest of the federal government (scientific research, the FBI, school programs, food stamps, the Environmental Protection Agency) now costs about 6 percent of GDP. To stay within the present budget

ROBERT J. SAMUELSON writes a column for *Newsweek* and The Washington Post Writers Group. He is the author of *The Good Life and Its Discontents: The American Dream in the Age of Entitlement* (Vintage).

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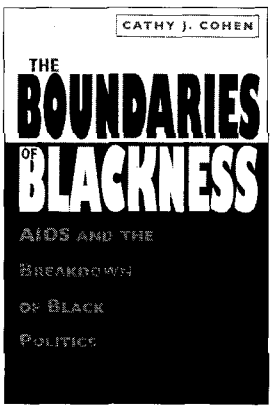

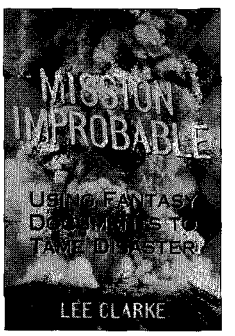

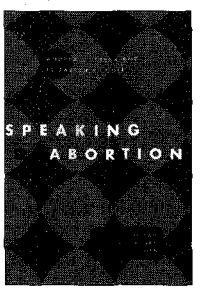

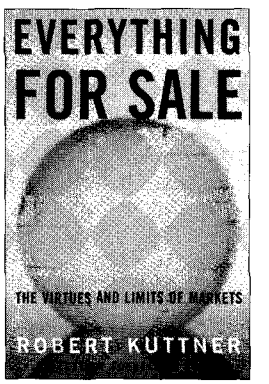

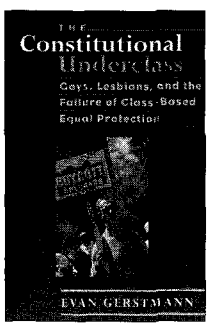

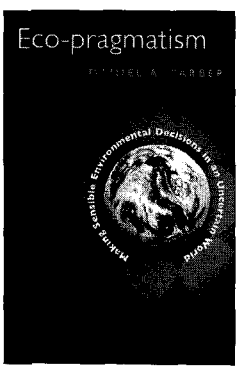

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(20 percent of GDP), this spending would have to be squeezed by about half. Or we could raise taxes by 15 percent; in today's dollars, that would amount to about $250 billion a year. Or, finally, we could resume massive budget deficits.

The outlook is daunting, even under optimistic assumptions (which are probably unrealistic). And, of course, higher taxes or deficits might threaten prosperity by reducing economic growth. But this is not the only problem of an aging America. Suppose that we simply assume that the future is affordable, in the sense that higher taxes or deficits do not cripple the economy. Present policies are still leading in the wrong direction. They are promoting a new type of segregation between those who are responsible for keeping the country going and those who—to put it bluntly—live off its bounty. The rigid separation between work and retirement is segmenting society into producers and parasites in ways that will ultimately benefit neither.

I may not want to work full-time for another 20 years, but I doubt that I will want to stop cold turkey. A lot of people feel the same way. By some surveys, they would like to mix work and retirement. This is hard to do today. But regardless of what I want, it certainly will not be healthy for society to have me—and millions like me—step aside for the last 15 or 20 years of our lives. Most of us will not be incapacitated and unable to work. That will become glaringly obvious to those who are forced to work and pay for our leisure. It would be unnatural if they didn't resent us.

We need to reinvent retirement. It ought to be less rigid and more attuned to changing social and economic realities. This does not mean abandoning today's system, including Social Security and Medicare. It does mean refashioning these programs. Since we live longer and are healthier, retirement ages should be raised to 68, and perhaps to 70. Since the old are wealthier, we should reduce benefits for the well-to-do and focus more on the poor. These steps would curb costs and encourage people to work longer, perhaps through part-time or part-year jobs. If we subsidize early retirement less, we will get less of it. The changes should be gradual, to give people ample time to prepare.

Whether we can accomplish this reinvention is unclear. Modern retirement is a huge social triumph, and Social Security and Medicare underpin that triumph. Their success transcends mere popularity. They helped the nation cope with social conditions that were barely foreseeable when these programs were created. Hardly anyone thought in 1935—the year in which Congress passed the Social Security Act—that life expectancy would leap forward so rapidly. In 1930, life expectancy at birth was 60; today it is 76. Even in 1965, when Congress enacted Medicare, the sense that most Americans would experience an extended retirement was weak.

Many Americans could not or did not save for their retirements, because they could not have plausibly anticipated that they would live so long. Social Security and Medicare compensated. They enabled many workers—especially men—to retire before their bodies broke down. Millions of others were spared from having to throw themselves on the mercy and charity of families. The paradox is that, although the elderly became more heavily dependent on government, these federal programs helped them feel more self-sufficient economically and psychologically.

The trouble is that the independence is a myth. Retirees remain massively dependent on government. Yet this myth has created expectations and constituencies that obstruct any revision of retirement. Almost all the talk of "reforming" Social Security and Medicare—or "saving" them—misses the reforms that are genuinely needed. Those reforms are largely off-limits politically, because they would reduce benefits by making them available later and focusing them more on the poor. Few politicians will touch these questions. A prudent society would do so; it would have done so ten or fifteen years ago. But we are not being prudent.

II.

How we reached this point is largely a forgotten story. What has become a political and psychological entitlement—a long and rewarding retirement—did not spring full-blown from the Social Security Act or any single event. It emerged slowly from rising prosperity, improving health, and a growing welfare state. A century ago, most men worked until they could no longer do so. Many died before they reached today's retirement age. At the age of 20 in 1900, white men could expect to live only until their early 60s. For blacks at the same age, life-spans averaged about a decade less. Women (also at 20) lived only a few years longer than men, and most were not wage earners. The decisive and terrifying event of their old age was often widowhood.

Dora L. Costa recounts (in a dry, academic prose) how all this changed. Her major contribution is to show that, even without Social Security and Medicare, retirement would have expanded dramatically. Indeed, by some statistics, the largest increases occurred before Social Security became important. In 1880, 78 percent of men 65 and over worked. By 1940, this had dropped to 44 percent. In 1990, it was 18 percent. By this measure, more than half the increase in men's retirement preceded the explosion of Social Security spending in the 1950s and 1960s. If nothing else, this attests to a deep longing to be free of toil, because—as Costa shows—men's health improved over this period. People were not less able to work; they simply worked less.

For a few reasons, this overstates the early expansion of retirement. Since retirement was such an alien concept, few good historical statistics exist. So Costa is driven to equate retirement among men with the statistical condition of not having a job after age 65. The two are different. Early in the century, older men were often fired and couldn't find new jobs. In the Great Depression, this surely accounted for a big rise in "retirement." And then there is what comes before and after age 65. Most workers now retire before 65. In 1995, 58 percent of workers took Social Security benefits at age 62, and 20 percent more took them at ages 63 and 64. Early retirement hardly existed in the 1950s. Congress did not authorize Social Security benefits at 62 until 1956 for women and until 1961 for men. And now people live longer, so retirement lasts longer. Since 1950, average life expectancy at age 65 has risen three years for men (to 16) and four years for women (to 19). All this means that the major expansion of retirement has occurred since World War II.

Still, Costa's central point survives: retirement's expansion transcends government policy. It has a power all its own. Private pensions, for example, started at American Express in 1875. By 1930, about 10 percent of the private labor force (2.7 million workers) were covered by some pension. The Revenue Act of 1942—a major wartime tax bill—made most contributions to company pensions tax-deductible. During the war, companies sometimes provided future pension benefits as a way to evade wage controls. The long-run effect was to foster more pensions, but even without the tax subsidy they would have spread.

In those early years, though, the idea of retirement was different. As Costa notes, the first private and government pension programs reflected many motives, but none embodied a belief that people deserved a period of rest, reflection, and enjoyment before death. Those were other times with other values, other

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customs, other concerns. Indeed, the very notion of organized and commercialized leisure was novel a century ago. In 1910, fewer than 30 percent of male workers had a recognized vacation, and most of that was unpaid. Rest and recreation were not things that were thought to be owed to people. And government aid to the old, the poor, and the disabled was meager or non-existent.

True, Congress did create a pension program for Union veterans after the Civil War, and eventually the program was extended to their widows. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, benefits went to nearly 1 million people and represented 25 to 30 percent of all federal spending. About a quarter of the 65-and-over population was covered. Yet the program was justified only as an expression of national gratitude to soldiers. Social reformers hoped that the military pensions would act as a springboard for a universal program. In 1909, one reformer wrote: "The nation [has] already declared it to be our duty to shelter the aged and wounded soldier, why should the victims of the 'army of labor' be neglected." The hope went unrealized.

A few states did create pensions. Arizona was the first, in 1915, though a court later threw out the program. Nevada, Montana, and Pennsylvania—states with "small elderly populations," Costa says—passed programs in 1923. Not until the Depression did many states do so. By the end of 1934, 28 states had programs, including Arizona. But benefits were small, while income and residency requirements were stiff. As Costa observes, "pensions could be denied to those who had financially responsible relatives, failed to work when judged capable, had deserted their families, were tramps or beggars, disposed of their property to qualify for a pension, were recipients of other government pensions, or were inmates." Those eligible for benefits ranged from 1 percent of the elderly in Maryland to 22 percent in Arizona.

Humanitarian and pragmatic concerns prompted these programs. Somehow, the needs of workers who couldn't handle jobs had to be met. In 1919, the Ohio Health and Old Age Insurance Commission observed: "Very few wage-earners can expect to be able to work until the end of their lives.... How are they to obtain a livelihood during those last years of life? This is the problem of old age as it affects the working-man." The same sensibility shaped the Social Security Act. The law dealt with "economic security" and also created federal-state programs for unemployment insurance and aid to single mothers.

Indeed, the largest program for the elderly was not the present system of Social Security, which did not pay out its first benefit until 1940. It was an old-age assistance program that joined with state programs to help the poorest of the elderly. Again, the motive was simple decency, compounded by a desire—understandably strong in the Depression—to encourage the hiring of younger workers by making it easier for older workers to quit or to be fired. In upholding the law, Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Cardozo wrote that "the hope behind this statute is to save men and women from the rigors of the poorhouse as well as from the haunting fear that such a lot awaits them when journey's end is near."

We have come a long way from these modest beginnings. One reason is that, over the years, Congress periodically increased benefits. In 1950, a retiring worker with average earnings received Social Security payments equal to about 20 percent of pre-retirement earnings. (This ratio is known as the replacement rate.) Now, benefits for a worker with average earnings amount to about 43 percent of pre-retirement earnings. For low-wage workers (those with 45 percent of average wages), the replacement rate is now about 58 percent, up from 33 percent in 1950. In practice, these figures understate the true comparison, because all Social Security benefits were untaxed until 1983, and most still are untaxed. So the replacement rate on after-tax income is higher.

Beyond this, the creation of Medicare in 1965 covered much of the elderly's health costs and, just as important, diminished the fear that they would be impoverished by unexpected medical bills. Pensions and private savings have also increased over the years. In 1996, they provided about 40 percent of income for the 65-and-over population (more for the well-to-do than the poor). By and large, older Americans now live on their own, whether in retirement communities or not. This, too, represents a gradual change. In 1880, almost half of retired men over 65 lived with children or relatives. Even in 1940, about a fifth (22 percent) did. Now, only about 5 percent do.

The result is that retirement has now become more a lifestyle and a choice, and less a sign of incapacity. And it is socially acceptable to acknowledge this fact. In 1951, only 3 percent of retiring men said "they had retired because they preferred leisure to work," Costa writes. By 1982, this was 48 percent. There is strength in numbers. As retirement has become more popular and respectable,

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it has also become more appealing, because there is more to do. For "seniors," there are retirement communities, exercise groups, travel tours, and discounts of all varieties. Virtually all the advances of modern technology—air travel, better highways and cars, cable television, and now the Internet—give the retired more opportunities. Costa quotes one retiree from a study conducted in the late 1970s:

> My wife and I have completely changed our lifestyle since retirement. For the first couple of years we traveled around the country to see sights and country (historical and scenic) I wanted to see. Then we joined the Wally Byam Caravan Club International and have greatly enjoyed new friends and a new lifestyle. We live in a 31-foot AIRSTREAM trailer—spend seven months in winter in a park in Melbourne, Fl., where we have every kind of activity. We dance and square dance and party all winter. Then in summer we travel around—stop and spend some days with children and grandchildren and the rest of the time traveling to rallies in caravans and sightseeing from Canada through 48 states and Mexico.

"The retired have become the true leisured class," writes Costa. That is an understatement.

III.

Unless you disapprove of pleasure, it is hard to object. The idea that we can, while still healthy and vigorous, cruise the country, visit children and grandchildren, read, play golf—or simply escape the daily grind—is enormously seductive to most people. Early retirement has risen because people like it. Still, there can be too much of a good thing, and that is what modern retirement is becoming. The trouble, again, is that all this leisure is hugely subsidized. Almost all older Americans, even the well-off, rely heavily on Social Security and Medicare. Among the richest fifth of people 65 and over, Social Security was 21 percent of their income in 1996. Among the second richest, it was 47 percent. As with all subsidies, we need to ask: Who gets? Who pays? And who benefits—society or merely the beneficiaries?

For years, we have dodged these urgent but delicate questions by means of a variety of ingenious rationales. We deny the very concept of subsidy by insisting that retirement benefits were "saved" for recipients or, more vaguely, "earned." These beliefs are delusions. Social Security is a pay-as-you-go program. Current taxes pay current benefits, even though the money passes through a "trust fund." The same is true of Medicare (though only part of its money flows through a "trust fund"). The past payroll taxes of today's beneficiaries were not "saved" to pay their benefits. Social Security benefits are related to earnings, but the relationship is weak. Benefits are proportionately higher for low-income workers. Retirees receive welfare payments just as food-stamp recipients do. Congress has decreed that a class of people deserve benefits and has set the criteria for eligibility.

"Welfare" is a pejorative term in America, and so hardly anyone applies it to Social Security or Medicare. Almost everyone feels sympathy toward the old. With luck, we all expect to become old; and today's old are usually someone's parents or grandparents. This general feeling of goodwill has insulated Social Security and Medicare from criticism and change. But rising costs are eroding this immunity. For this reason, we are hearing new arguments about why we need not worry: faster economic growth can pay the costs of the baby boom; so can greater immigration; and the costs have been exaggerated because society's dependency ratio (the combination of young and old) is not increasing.

Peter G. Peterson does not believe any of these arguments. He is an admitted alarmist on aging, having written three previous books on the same general subject. *Gray Dawn* has two main virtues. The first is to show that the problems in Europe and Japan are worse than the problems in the United States. Their populations are aging more rapidly, in part because their families have fewer children. In the United States, the fertility rate (the number of children per woman) is about 2, which replaces the population. But it is 1.4 in Japan, 1.3 in Germany, and 1.2 in Italy. As a result, Italy will have a fifth of its population 65 or over by 2003, Japan by 2005, and Germany by 2006. In some countries, work forces will soon shrink.

The book's second virtue is to refute all the reasons that we have been given not to worry. Begin with the economy: if we expand the pie faster, we are told, everyone can have a bigger piece. This sounds easy, but it is virtually impossible. Economic growth stems mainly from two factors: more workers (or longer hours); and higher productivity (efficiency, or output per hour worked). Since 1960, roughly half of the economy's growth has stemmed from expansion of the labor force. Between 1960 and 1998, workers grew from 70 million to 138 million. But the retirement of the baby boom will slow the growth of the labor force to a crawl after 2015. So productivity would have to double or more—possible, but unlikely—to maintain present economic growth. And even that would be a mixed blessing. Faster productivity growth would mean higher wages; and with Social Security benefits tied to wages, benefits would also ultimately rise.

What about immigration? It might help slightly, with the emphasis on "slightly." At present, legal and illegal immigration probably exceeds 1 million a year. Peterson estimates that this might have to rise to 4 million annually to make a sizeable impact on paying for federal retirement programs. Even if his estimate is high, common sense suggests that the point is correct. To make a difference, immigration would have to be huge. But this would, in turn, magnify the social strains of assimilating waves of newcomers. There is little public desire for this. "In America, as throughout the developed world, a growing share of voters wants to restrict immigration *beneath* current levels," Peterson rightly remarks.

Finally, there is the dependency ratio. It simply defines the problem away. Together, the burden of the young and old—those dependent on others—will not change; and so (the argument goes) the future will be as affordable as the past. In 1970, those younger than 20 were 38 percent of the population and those 65 and over were 10 percent. That amounts to 48 percent. In 2030, the two are projected to amount to 44 percent (20 percent for the old, 24 percent for the young). But not so fast, says Peterson. Families pay directly most of the costs of children, while government (and, therefore, taxation) bears the burden of the elderly. In 1995, federal, state, and local government spent about $15,000 for every American over 65 and about $6,000 (including school) for every child. And there's another crucial difference: "Money spent on children is an investment [in society's future]."

So the aging problem will not fade away. Faster economic growth and more immigration might ease the stresses; but the stresses are immutable. Peterson also discards another solution: "privatization." That label covers many proposals that would replace or supplement Social Security with private savings accounts, financed with payroll taxes. The idea is that workers would save for their own retirements. Although Peterson isn't hostile, he rightly notes that this approach will not save the baby boom. It is too late. Unless Congress reduced or eliminated benefits for today's recipients, there is not enough money to finance savings accounts for the baby boom that would pay benefits at promised levels. Any privatization would have to cut current

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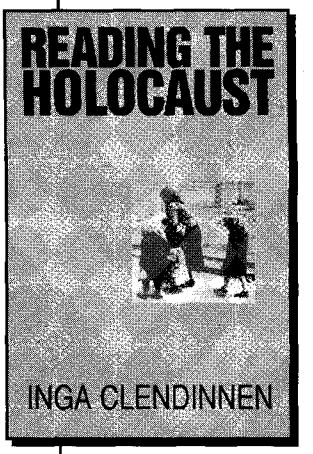
benefits or be phased in over many decades. Initially, extra taxes might be needed to finance the savings accounts.

Thus the irresistible force (aging population) is meeting the immovable object (retirement programs). Sooner or later, a collision is inevitable. The only question is whether it occurs sooner or later. The evidence from abroad is not reassuring. In 1995, Peterson reports, "the Dutch Parliament was forced to repeal a recently enacted cut in retirement benefits after a strong Pension Party, backed by the elderly, emerged from nowhere to punish the reformers. In 1996, the French government's modest proposal to trim pensions triggered strikes and even riots." Political paralysis is widespread.

We ought to remember that stalemate creates winners and losers. Government retirement programs involve massive income redistribution from the young to the old. Increasingly, this is also a transfer from a poorer and less economically secure population to a richer and more secure one. By income, the old are much poorer than the young. In 1996, households 65 and over had a median income of $29,000, compared to $48,000 for households 35 to 44 and $57,000 for households 45 to 54. But this comparison is misleading, though it is often made. Median net wealth (the value of what people own—their homes, stocks, cars—minus their debts) is usually higher for the old than the young. In 1995, it was $107,000 for those 65 to 74 compared with $51,000 for those 35 to 44 and $91,000 for those 45 to 54.

More important, older Americans say in surveys that they feel more secure. The National Opinion Research Center asks respondents whether they are "satisfied," "more or less satisfied," or "not at all satisfied" with their financial situation. In 1998, 43 percent of those 65 and over said they were satisfied and only 14 percent said they were not. This exceeded every other age group. Among those 40 to 49, only 27 percent pronounced themselves satisfied, while 28 percent said they were not. There are many possible explanations for these age-related differences. Living expenses for older Americans are generally lower. Almost four-fifths own their homes, most probably with mortgages paid. Child-rearing costs have shriveled, as have work expenses. Taxes are lower. Income—from Social Security, pensions, savings—may seem more stable. People's ambitions are lower.

Still, the irony is inescapable. It is doubtful that the architects of Social Security or Medicare anticipated that they were creating programs that would



Reading the Holocaust

Inga Clendinnen

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Searching and eloquent, *Reading the Holocaust* is an uncompromising attempt to extract the comprehensible—the recognizably human—from the unthinkable inhuman acts of the Holocaust. Clendinnen explores the experience of the Holocaust from both the victims' and the perpetrators' points of view. She discusses the remarkable survivor testimonies of writers such as Primo Levi and Charlotte Delbo, the vexing issue of "resistance" in the camps, and survivors' strategies for understanding the motivations of the Nazi leadership.

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VIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES
With Selected Writings
By St. George Tucker
Foreword by Clyde N. Wilson

As professor of law at the College of William and Mary, St. George Tucker in 1803 published ***View of the Constitution*** —the first extended, systematic commentary on the United States Constitution after its ratification and later its amendment by the Bill of Rights. ***View*** was originally part of Tucker's "Americanized" or "republicanized" edition of the multivolume *Commentaries on the Laws of England by Sir William Blackstone*. Generations of American law students, lawyers, judges, and statesmen learned their Blackstone—and also their understanding of the Constitution—through Tucker. As Clyde N. Wilson notes, "Tucker is the exponent of Jeffersonian republicanism . . . in contrast to the commercial republicanism of New England that has since the Civil War been taken to be the only true form of American philosophy." In addition to the entirety of ***View***, the Liberty Fund volume includes seven other essays from Tucker's renowned edition of Blackstone. These include "On the Study of Law," "Of the Unwritten, or Common Law of England," and "Of the Several Forms of Government."

St. George Tucker (1752–1827) was an officer in the American Revolutionary Army, a professor of law, justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, judge of the Federal District Court for Virginia by appointment of President James Madison, progenitor of a long line of jurists and scholars, and stepfather of John Randolph of Roanoke.

Clyde N. Wilson is Professor of History and Editor of *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* at the University of South Carolina.

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transfer huge amounts from a less economically secure group to a more economically secure group. But these programs have succeeded so spectacularly—and the well-being of the elderly has improved so dramatically—that this is increasingly occurring.

IV.

Aging societies around the world pose profound questions. Will they become economically moribund, because the old are less inventive and less accepting of change? How will families cope if people have to care for both their children and their parents who, increasingly, live to 85, 90, or 100? How will we deal with the ethical issues of prolonging life at great expense and little hope? Will the world become more dangerous, because older societies—with few children—will not risk their youth in war and will become vulnerable to those that will? Peterson poses all these questions and answers none of them, because they are unanswerable. We cannot predict the future.

But we are not powerless to affect the future. We can deal with the obvious problems. Many possible solutions are no mystery. In its recent report, the Congressional Budget Office outlines some of them. One is to raise the eligibility ages for Social Security and Medicare. Already Social Security's normal retirement age of 65 is scheduled to move gradually to 66 by 2009 and stay there until 2020 (affecting those born between 1943 and 1954). Then it would rise slowly to 67 by 2027 for those born in 1960 or after. These increases could be accelerated. My own view is that we should move to 68 by 2015 or 2020, and then maybe to 70. Existing law would preserve Social Security at 62, though with reduced benefits. I would raise this threshold; and I would also raise Medicare's eligibility along with Social Security's.

Similarly, benefits could be skewed more toward poorer recipients. The existing formula already does this. In 1997, for example, it replaced 90 percent of new retirees' monthly earnings up to $455, but only 15 percent above $2,741. By tinkering with the formula, benefits in the upper half of the income distribution could be cut. The 65-and-over population also receives special tax breaks, mainly the exclusion of most Social Security benefits from taxes. In 1999, these are worth more than $20 billion. These should be phased out. And older Americans—especially the affluent—could be asked to bear more of the costs of Medicare. Today, Medicare premiums cover only about 11 percent of expenses.

Such proposals could be mixed in various combinations. Almost any plan would sharply reduce future budget costs. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the savings from a more modest package (less increase in the retirement age, for instance) might keep the budget in balance over the next 75 years (assuming a constant level of taxes and other spending as a share of GDP). But cutbacks also have a second purpose: to extend peoples' working lives by making earlier retirement less attractive. As Peterson writes: "Working longer is not a way to avoid the hard choices. It *is* the hard choice."

Working longer does not mean that people will stay in career jobs for another three, four, or five years. Some will, but some will not want to—and some will not be able to. Corporate "downsizing" in the past decade hurt workers most in their late 40s, 50s, and early 60s. Companies in trouble are often in mature industries, and therefore have older work forces. Economic logic also induces companies to nudge out older workers, who are put at a disadvantage by seniority-based pay systems and fringe benefit costs. Peterson quotes the management consultant Sylvester Schieber: "In the U.S., we have a major problem in our pay structure being related to age.... Employer-financed health costs are higher for older workers. Leave programs award workers with longer tenures for time not worked.... Disability and workers' comp costs rise with age. All of these facets of the pay system reduce older workers' relative profitability."

So there are practical complications. If older workers have to be paid near the top of the pay scale, many companies will not hire them. Age discrimination laws need to take this into account. Nor should laws be drawn so tightly that companies can't dismiss workers who seem less productive or valuable. That would invite economic stagnation. Workers who lose career jobs—or quit because they are fed up after 20 or 30 years—may still need a job. But a new job may pay less than the old; and it might lack health insurance. Should people below 65 be allowed to buy Medicare coverage? If so, down to what age? At what price?

These practical problems, I think, can be overcome. The American economy has shown that it can generate new jobs and customize jobs to fit new groups of workers. Over the last 40 years, it has done so for two huge groups, women and teenagers, who have flooded the labor market. Why couldn't it do the same for older Americans? As labor-force growth slows—a consequence of societal aging—companies will surely seek to retain good workers. Firms might offer "staying" bonuses just as some now offer "signing" bonuses. Or they might design more part-time, part-year, or "consulting" jobs to accommodate a desire for more leisure.

We do not really need to know the precise answers. If the economy remains healthy—if there is no depression—we can assume that the demand for older workers will materialize. But what about supply? Will older Americans want to work? Probably not, if we continue paying them so much not to work. Our present programs, which started as a humane effort to aid people who couldn't work and were inevitably dependent, now encourage them to stop working when they still can. Lower subsidies would reverse that. People would have to earn more to pay for their retirements. This is probably the only way that most Americans will work longer.

Hardly anyone discusses these questions. President Clinton certainly is not discussing them. He has consistently refused to consider major benefits cuts—and he has attacked and undercut anyone who has considered them. His refrain is "saving" Social Security and Medicare. Congress, predictably, also will not touch the issue. Democrats regard Social Security and Medicare as political preserves. Republicans are terrified that any hint of a benefit cut (no matter how far in the future) will subject them to withering political attack. All the lobbies for older Americans protect benefits. And so there is a bipartisan consensus to do nothing. It could last for years, because the budgetary pressures of an aging society do not truly intensify for ten to fifteen years.

The problem with procrastination, of course, is that it will be hugely unfair to someone. As more people retire, it may be politically impossible to alter benefits. This would punish tomorrow's workers with higher taxes, lower government services, or higher federal debt. It is also possible that the costs of these programs will—when coupled with the impact of trends and events we cannot now foresee—become so heavy that Congress will be forced to cut benefits. This would punish baby-boom workers, who would have the rules of retirement changed in midstream, with little time to prepare.

President Clinton bears much of the blame for the present paralysis. One disappointment of Peterson's book is that he does not say so forthrightly. In 1994, Peterson served on the Commission on Entitlements and Tax Reform, appointed by Clinton. It urged action to curb spending, and Peterson blandly declares that "America's political leader-

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ship thanked us for the report, shook our hands, and walked away." No, it was Clinton who shook his hand and walked away. A President has the almost unique power to set the political agenda—to determine what issues will be debated, on what terms, and in what language. If a Democratic President will not acknowledge the need for benefit cuts, then Republicans will understandably shy away. When they bravely suggested cuts in Medicare in 1995, Clinton successfully—and dishonestly—savaged them.

Peterson writes as if he would still like to be invited to the White House. By soft-pedaling his criticism, he (and others like him) serve as enablers of this terrible procrastination. But there is a deeper cause of the present paralysis. Public opinion regards almost any discussion of cutting retiree benefits as inhumane, unprogressive, and even barbaric. Clinton panders to this climate and perpetuates it; but he did not create it. As long as it survives, debate will be stilled.

The public's notion of aging subsists on an outdated image of retirees. Until now, I have depicted them as a cheerful, healthy, and secure bunch who frolic at everyone else's expense. This is wildly inaccurate, of course. A fifth of the 65-and-older population require some help in daily activities—dressing, getting about, eating. About 5 percent live in nursing homes. About 11 percent have incomes below the federal poverty line; and without Social Security, more than half might live below it. Older Americans have sharp and obvious anxieties. They fear loneliness, the death of a spouse, and the loss of self-sufficiency. They worry that they will become a burden on their children or that their children will abandon them. They dread going into a nursing home. They think about dying and the possibility that it will be prolonged, painful, and degrading.

Getting old isn't a picnic, but many of the worst medical and emotional problems do not occur until people reach their 70s or 80s. I have emphasized the opposite picture because it, too, is true—and it is ignored in our debates. We talk about old age as if nothing had changed since 1935 or 1965. As Costa reminds us, the retirement age of 65 dates back to Bismarck's pensions in the late nineteenth century. Yet political convention still considers this dividing line almost sacrosanct, pretending that everyone on one side is generally healthy, vigorous, and alert, and almost everyone on the other is frail, poor, and (sooner or later) feeble-minded.

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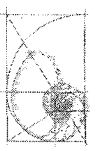

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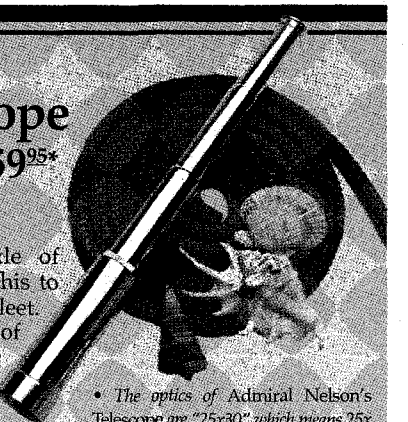

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research that this picture is false. And for those who distrust common sense or anecdotal evidence, the research is impressive. In 1987, the MacArthur Foundation began sponsoring an extensive study of the aging process by a variety of scholars. The results, summarized in *Successful Aging*, demolish the stereotypes. Here is one indicator of improved physical well-being: in 1957, 55 percent of the 65-and-older population had no teeth; now the figure is 20 percent. In general, the studies found that most people are physically and mentally fit well beyond 65. In 1994, 89 percent of those between 65 and 74 reported "no disability whatsoever." And the studies find that individuals' aging is affected more by lifestyle—diet, physical exercise, emotional connections—than heredity. (According to one study, the influence of genes is about 30 percent.)

It is long past time to conform political debate to social reality. We also need to reject the platitudes that the elderly can contribute to society by volunteering or offering "wisdom." This may be true, but it is a tiny truth. The main way that older Americans can contribute is by doing the same thing that other adults do: that is, by working, and not becoming a premature social burden. We need to abandon the notion that everyone over 65 is entitled to become a ward of the state. People do not suddenly become "needy" and dependent on their 65th birthday. I have always disliked the term "greedy geezers"—it is inflammatory and it stigmatizes an entire generation (mainly the Depression and World War II generation) for the good fortune of living long. But enough is enough. If baby-boom politicians perpetuate the status quo, we can be sure of one thing: our children will call us greedy geezers. And they will be right. •

The Making of a Monster

BY ISTVAN DEAK

Hitler
1889–1936: Hubris
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(Norton, 845 pp., $35)

Hitler's Vienna:
A Dictator's Apprenticeship
by Brigitte Hamann
translated by Thomas Thornton
(Oxford University Press, 482 pp., $35)

Do we really need any more books on Hitler? The library catalogue at my university lists 504 entries with Hitler's name in the title and 1,778 entries in which "Hitler" is a keyword. A recent German account remarks upon 120,000 pieces of work related to the Nazi ruler. In terms of literary popularity, Hitler exceeds Mao, Churchill, Stalin, and Lenin. Yet as Ian Kershaw remarks in his splendid book, there is always more to say about Hitler, for the simple reason that this has been his century: "Certainly, no other individual has stamped a more profound imprint on it than Adolf Hitler." Every generation, even every fraction of a generation, will have the need, and the warrant, to reexamine the life of the figure in whose shadow we all live.

The quality of scholarship about Hitler has been high, and Ian Kershaw's and Brigitte Hamann's books are also works of great merit. To be sure, we have witnessed a steady stream of cheap, sensationalist accounts; but at last the wave of reminiscences of the "I-Was-Hitler's-Moustache" genre has passed, with the demise of Hitler's chauffeurs, secretaries, and hangers-on. With the partial exception of the work of the self-proclaimed "mild fascist" David Irving, revisionist histories rehabilitating the Führer have not made it into mainstream historiography or into the mass market. Nor do many people care any more about the venerable Marxist-Leninist histories, for which the Führer was nothing but the agent of monopoly capital. Kershaw points out that not even the recent German conservative argument that Hitlerism was but a copy of Stalinism enjoyed more than temporary popularity. Instead, as John Lukacs demonstrated in *The Hitler of History*, most recent scholarly biographies have been appropriately cautious, though there have also been a few interesting mavericks of psychohistory.

Most of the significant new studies of Hitler come from Germany, and they are consequently somewhat weighed down by academic gravity. Yet few German works can compete, at least in scale, with Kershaw's biography, which is likely to exceed fifteen hundred pages when it is complete. The first volume alone contains nearly two hundred pages of footnotes. This is not to say that there is new information here. It has been many years since new documentary evidence about Hitler, his court, and the entire Nazi system has come to light. Indeed, it may well be that nothing truly new and important will be discovered.

Still, what has been discovered remains a formidable mountain of evidence. The Nazis were proud and accomplished bureaucrats, and so they amassed millions of files on themselves, even on their misdeeds. When they were defeated, their archives passed into Allied hands, and especially into American hands; microfilm copies of these documents are now freely available in the National Archives near Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. The best that a new biographer can do, therefore, is to add more details to the portrait of Hitler, and to reinterpret it. In these endeavors, both Kershaw and Hamann have succeeded admirably.

There is a further difficulty. The more we know about Hitler, the more enigmatic he—or rather, his fulgurant success—becomes. Here was a man without character, or with a most uninspiring personality. He had no vices; he did not drink or smoke, and he did not really care for women. His chief talents were a sharp mind and the ability to deliver hysterical speeches. He had a genius for looking his crazed followers deep in the eyes, and for remembering an amazing number of facts, faces, and names. Perhaps those are precisely the qualities necessary for an aspiring dictator to succeed. "Outside politics," Kershaw writes, "Hitler's life was largely a void."

Hitler spent most of his life in the company of uninspiring personalities: half-baked intellectuals in the men's shelters and the cheap sublets of pre-World War I Vienna, third-rate local political figures in the period following World War I, and then, as well as forever after, secretaries,

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chauffeurs, photographers, and rough and ready "fellow-fighters" from the early period of the Nazi movement. Against such a background, even the mediocre architect and mediocre intellectual Albert Speer stands out as a beacon of intelligence and refinement.

As Kershaw and Hamann explain, the Führer was lazy, except for short bursts of ferocious energy. He kept an impossible schedule, when he kept any schedule at all. He was surrounded by cronies, and he had no true friends. He was a hypochondriac who lived in constant fear of dying too soon. He held onto preconceived ideas as the springboard for interminable declamations, and he rarely, if ever, listened to other opinions.

Hitler gained his historical and political knowledge, which was always superficial, from newspapers and from the speeches and writings of right-wing Vienna politicians, several of whom must have been lunatics. He had been a terrible student who never finished high school. As a young man, he consistently lied about his artistic accomplishments. He had little talent for painting, a fact that he later admitted; and although some historians, such as John Lukacs, believe that he had the makings of a good architect, this has not really been shown by his grandiose and coarse architectural plans. In any event, he never had the chance to become a professional architect, owing to his poor educational background. Most of us would not have wasted time on the young Hitler, except those blessed with the foresight that one day this nonentity would become the most influential person of our century.

How did Hitler succeed in winning over the German people, and in conquering Europe? This is the great dilemma, and it haunts our two authors, too, especially Kershaw, who is concerned less with Hitler's banal thoughts than with the question of why one of the world's most educated peoples fell in love with this man, and enabled him to achieve power, and followed him to the bitter end. Kershaw argues that it was power, and power alone, that interested Hitler; and this made him uniquely and diabolically suited for a time when many, if not most, Germans yearned for a charismatic leader to bring them out of the widespread gloom born of a lost war, the country's postwar humiliation at Versailles, and the economic vicissitudes of the early 1920s and early 1930s. They gave absolute power to a man who wanted nothing but absolute power, and who promised them political and economic resurrection as well as renewed international prestige. And since the people adored him—as they might well have adored any other rabble-rouser who promised what Hitler promised—he himself began to believe in his own semi-divinity. He was convinced that he had been chosen by Providence to protect the German race from its enemies and to lead it to Olympian heights of power and beatitude. He repeatedly congratulated the Germans for having found him as their leader.

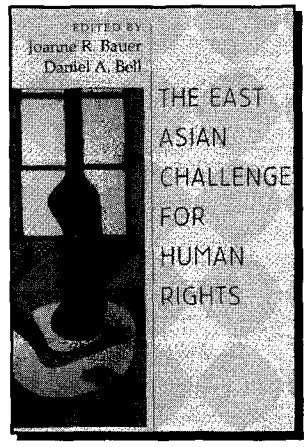
Kershaw and Hamann are well qualified to attempt new interpretations of the life of the Führer. Kershaw has written extensively on Hitler, the Nazi dictatorship, and popular opinion and political dissent in the Third Reich; he is, indeed, one of the great authorities on the Nazi period. Hamann is a historian whose sensitive but unsentimental biographies of two tragic figures, the Austrian Empress Elizabeth and her son Crown Prince Rudolph, have become bestsellers in German-speaking lands. She shares the enviable ability of so many women historians in Europe to write delightfully while adhering to the documentary evidence. For this book, she must have visited dozens of police precincts in Vienna, as well as every shabby residence in which the young Hitler spent at least one night. Her study is more than an account of Hitler's life in Vienna; it is also a detailed analysis of politics, life, and culture in the turn-of-the-century imperial capital.

Hamann is among the few historians who have looked beyond the glamour of Vienna, beyond the splendid presence of the imperial court and the city's avant-garde. Although she writes glowingly about the world of Klimt, Schiele, and Kokoschka, of Otto Wagner and Gustav Mahler, of Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal, she makes clear that this was certainly not the world of the Viennese non-Jewish middle and lower-middle classes. Indeed, those groups tended to react very badly to the doings of the modernists.

Every incomprehensible painting, every atonal piece of music, every outrageous theatrical production increased their fear of modernity, which in their eyes was the consequence of a variety of malevolent causes: the supra-national—and thus non-German—policy of the Habsburg monarchy, with its unrestricted influx of non-German immigrants into the city; the rise of a dangerous Marxist workers' movement; monopoly capitalism that seemed to threaten their livelihood; and a new morality or, rather, a new immorality. For these people, there were evils all around; and these evils were symbolized by the Jews, who seemed to be behind every detestable new development. The rootless

The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights

***Joanne R. Bauer** and **Daniel A. Bell**, Editors*



"To allow the West to define 'universal' human rights seems wrong; to condone the abuses of authoritarians who hide behind 'non-Western values' seems equally wrong. This judicious and multifaceted book addresses the difficult but vitally important area that lies behind these two intuitions: What basic human values are shared in today's global village? How can we forge from them common conceptions of human rights?"

—Perry Link, Princeton University

The "Asian values" argument holds that not all Asian states can be or should be expected to protect human rights to the same degree. This position of "cultural relativism," often used by authoritarian governments in Asia to counter charges of human rights violations, has been dismissed by many Western and Asian human rights advocates as a weak excuse. *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights* moves beyond the politicized rhetoric that has dogged this debate to identify the more persuasive contributions by East Asian intellectuals to the evolving international debate on human rights.

Contributors: *Abdullahi A. An-Na'im, Joanne Bauer, Daniel A. Bell, Joseph Chan, Jack Donnelly, Yash Ghai, Mab Huang, Tatsuo Inoue, Benedict Kingsbury, Yasuaki Onuma, Norani Othman, Suwanna Satha-Anand, Amartya Sen, Dorothy Solinger, Kevin Y. L. Tan, Charles Taylor*

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Hitler, who desperately desired to become a part of the respectable middle class, swallowed wholesale nearly all the ideas that marked the bigoted conservative backlash against the political liberalism and the artistic license of the time.

It was in Vienna that Hitler acquired all the ideas that were to dominate the rest of his life. Hamann describes the Vienna of the poor, the overcrowded tenements harboring masses of immigrant workers. There were also the homeless living in the streets. She presents a rather depressing picture of the metropolis, where, among other things, pitched battles were fought in parliament and in the streets between nationalistic and anti-Semitic Germans and nationalistic and anti-Semitic Czechs. Occasionally Hamann draws an unduly dark picture; after all, Vienna and the rest of the Dual Monarchy were developing economically at an extraordinary pace all the way to the outbreak of World War I, and living conditions were improving even for the working class.

Kershaw and Hamann dispose of many myths regarding the young Hitler—the claim that he was partly of Jewish origin, and the claim that in Vienna he endured extreme poverty. The latter myth was created by Hitler himself in *Mein Kampf*, a book written in 1924 and replete with other fictions regarding his origins and his youth. Kershaw and Hamann also dispose of Hitler's later claim that he had become an anti-Semite in Vienna. There is no evidence, from friend or foe, that in those days Hitler disliked the Jews. In his endless political monologues he rarely referred to the Jews; and when he did, it was in a favorable vein. Young Hitler had several close Jewish acquaintances, one might even say friends. As Hamann shows, Hitler spent most of his time in the men's shelter with educated Jews, and he dismissed the then-popular blood libel charge against the Jew Leopold Hilsner, calling it "absolute nonsense, a groundless slander." Those who commissioned his watercolors, and thereby provided him with a livelihood, were Jews; he also owed his escape from a brief stint in the depths of lice-ridden misery and homelessness to Jewish benefactors.

Hitler especially admired Dr. Eduard Bloch, a Jewish physician from Linz, who had treated his mother for breast cancer. Treatment at that time consisted of the use of iodine, which must have added to her sufferings. Some historians argue that Hitler's hatred of Jews and his desire to gas them or to poison them stem from this incident. Yet both Kershaw and Hamann make clear that Hitler, who adored his mother (he hated his father, a lower civil servant who was a ruthless martinet), was grateful to the Jewish doctor, despite his mother's agonizing death in 1907. He readily paid the doctor's fees, and wrote letters to Bloch expressing his gratitude; and in 1938, following the *Anschluss* in Austria, he made sure that the doctor and his family were able to emigrate under the most favorable conditions. In return, the doctor commented positively on the young Hitler in memoirs written in the United States.

When did Hitler become an anti-Semite? Apparently not during the war, when this Austrian draft dodger served bravely in the Bavarian army. No fellow-soldier remembered his having made anti-Semitic statements, and he received the Iron Cross First Class, his most cherished possession for the rest of his life, at the recommendation of a Jewish lieutenant. Many historians believe Hitler when he writes in *Mein Kampf* that it was the collapse of Germany in the fall of 1918 that taught him to truly hate the Jews. Temporarily blinded by gas, Hitler experienced, as he claimed later, the most profound disappointment of his life at the news of the German collapse; and he, like other desperate Germans, concluded that the Jews had stabbed Germany in the back. But even this assertion is hard to prove.

Later, when he was Führer, he remarked that if ten to fifteen thousand Jews had been gassed at that time, Germany's tragedy could have been avoided. In reality, however, his suffering and his humiliation at the end of the war were far less tragic than he later claimed. It seems most likely, and this is also Kershaw's opinion, that it was after the war, when he was already a political observer for right-wing officers in Bavaria, and following his entry into politics, that Hitler realized the political potency of anti-Semitism. Without it, one could not succeed in right-wing politics; and left-wing and liberal-democratic politics he abhorred. It was when Hitler understood that his being an "expert on Jewish affairs" appealed to his audience that he himself began to hate the Jews, until this hatred became the alpha and omega of his life.

What is so remarkable, and so mysterious, about all this is that Hitler's ferocious anti-Semitic diatribes of the 1920s were almost verbatim repetitions of the anti-Semitic tirades that he had heard in Vienna during the pre-war years—but in Vienna these tirades seemed to have had no effect on him. In what is perhaps the best chapter in her excellent book, Hamann presents a cross-section of turn-of-the-century Viennese "theoreticians of race and explainers of the world." These dubious luminaries range from the "respectable" anti-Semite Karl Lueger, the famous mayor of Vienna, to madmen whose ravings enjoyed great popularity. Lueger, after whom a major boulevard is named in Vienna even today, and whom Hitler admired more than anyone else, is now remembered as an opportunistic and relatively moderate anti-Semite, who had many Jewish friends and who claimed for himself the right to decide who was and who was not a Jew. It is less often noted that Lueger publicly and repeatedly compared Jews to locusts; or that he suggested publicly that all Jews be ground into artificial fertilizer, and that Jews should be packed in ships and sunk in the open sea.

In the even more rabidly anti-Semitic camp were such militant racists as Viktor Lischka, Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, Guido von List, Hanns Hörbiger, Otto Weininger, and Arthur Trebitsch. The noble predicates of some of these people were their own invention. Some of them were converted Jews who engaged in extreme self-hatred. Hitler must have acquired his idea about the urgent "demixing" of races from Guido von List, who differentiated between the Aryan masters and the others, whom he called the herd people. List's Aryans originated from a continent near the North Pole, from which the Ice Age had driven them. In a speech delivered at Munich in 1920, Hitler declared: "[I]n the incomparable ice deserts of the north, a race of giants in strength and health had grown in ethnic purity."

Even more influential on Hitler's later thinking was the Viennese race ideologist "Baron Adolf Georg (Jörg) Lanz von Liebenfels, Ph.D.," whose assumed name, phony academic title, and false noble predicate hid a commoner of Jewish background. Lanz von Liebenfels despised and feared Mongolians, Negroes, the Mediterranean peoples, the Catholic Church, and women who preferred "half-monkeys" as sexual partners to pure Aryans. A woman defiled with the semen of a lower race remained, in Lanz von Liebenfels's view, impregnated forever. In an almost verbatim repetition of this argument, Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*:

> With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people. With every means he tries to destroy the racial foundations of the people he has set out to subjugate.

Other "greats" of the Vienna coterie of racial scientists included the engineer Hanns Horbiger, who asserted that huge

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blocks of ice once fell into the sun, triggering an explosion that, through the splintering of the sun, created the universe. As Hamann demonstrates, Hitler borrowed from Horbiger the tendency to view history in terms of eons, to measure it not on a human scale but according to cosmic laws governing human history. The converted Jew Arthur Trebitsch suffered from a paranoid hatred of Jews and pretended to be pure Aryan. Hitler knew well that Trebitsch was a Jew, but in the 1920s he nonetheless considered putting Trebitsch in charge of ideological training. And there was the unfortunate Otto Weininger, a converted young Jewish philosopher from Vienna who became a lasting symbol of Jewish self-hatred (and radical misogyny). Weininger wrote that "the genuine, real Jew, like woman, has no self and thus no value in himself." He also stated that women and Jews were pimps. Although Weininger committed suicide in 1903, Hitler remembered him well, and as late as 1941 he remarked, quoting an early Nazi "intellectual," that Weininger had been the only decent Jew, who "killed himself when he realized that the Jew lives on the corruption of others' folkdom."

Hamann's and Kershaw's narratives are so vivid that they almost inspire a little sympathy for this miserably failed student, aspiring artist, music and theater buff, and accomplished lazybones. Hamann stops her narrative in 1914, and for the next twenty-two years in the Führer's life we must rely on Kershaw. His account is one of the best descriptions of Hitler's rapid rise to power. Having entered, in 1919, the minuscule National Socialist Party (NSDAP) in Munich, Hitler had become the party's undisputed leader by 1921. As Kershaw explains, Hitler's chief assets were that he had proven himself an unparalleled mob-orator, and that he understood the need for a paramilitary party force, the SA and the SS, in the maelstrom of Bavarian politics.

There were many ups and downs in Hitler's career, the worst occurring in November 1923 during the bungled Beer Hall Putsch, which nearly cost him his life. But the limitless admiration of German judges for "patriotic"—that is, right-wing—political criminals came to his rescue. His short and comfortable stay at Landsberg prison created the myth of Hitler as a martyr. Another stroke of luck was his introduction to good society, where he charmed aristocratic women with his gaucheries and his Austrian-style hand-kisses. He was no longer only a rabble-rouser; he had become *salonfahig*, acceptable in elite circles.

Hitler weathered it all: his renewed political insignificance around 1926, when Weimar Germany rode the wave of economic success; the intra-party intrigues; and the many enemies within the movement. What always saved him was his boundless self-confidence. He was sure that providence had delivered him to the Germans. In return, he was seen increasingly as a prophetic person, a genius, the educator of the nation, the awakener, the liberator. As Kershaw shows, the Germans had an infatuation with Hitler himself, not with the ideology that few cared to decipher, and even less with the NSDAP or the party bosses. When the Great Depression came, millions, including Prussian princes, scholars, clergymen, peasants, workers, and the unemployed, found in him the long-awaited savior. Still, he did not come to power in January 1933 by popular will, for his party had never garnered the absolute majority of votes. He owed his rise to intrigues in the entourage of the increasingly senile President Hindenburg.

Kershaw demonstrates how naïve almost all the politicians and the political writers of the time were concerning Hitler. On the far left, they believed that his assumption of the chancellorship marked the final stage of the collapse of monopoly capitalism: the bourgeoisie, in despair, had turned to a butcher, willing to use extreme terror to stop the inevitable advance of the proletariat. At last, the communists believed, the iron fist under the silk glove of capitalism had been unmasked. Until their ultimate triumph, now only around the corner, the main enemy continued to be not the radical fascist Hitler but the Social Democrats, or "Social Fascists," who were in a position to sow discord among the ranks of the workers. Until 1933, communists in the Reichstag voted consistently with the Nazis, and even after their leaders were arrested, tortured, or executed, and after thousands of communists had joined the NSDAP, communists in exile demanded a ruthless struggle against Social Democracy. There can be no doubt that all this occurred at the behest of Stalin, who feared the Western democracies more than he feared Hitler.

It is disheartening to contemplate how few Germans, or even how few non-Germans, understood the threat to civilization that Hitler represented. Socialists and democrats confidently expected that Chancellor Hitler would fail to improve the economy and would be forced to resign. The conservatives were certain that they could manipulate and restrain the Führer. One of the few exceptions to the general foolishness was General Ludendorff, the leader of the German forces in World War I, who has gone down in history as the symbol of ruthless Prussian militarism and reactionary imperialism. During the Beer Hall Putsch, Ludendorff marched at the side of Hitler, but later he fell out with him, and by 1933 he was politically isolated. Kershaw quotes from Ludendorff's letter addressed to President Hindenburg at the end of January 1933: "I solemnly prophesy that this accursed man will cast our Reich into the abyss and bring our nation to inconceivable misery. Future generations will damn you in your grave for what you have done." Kershaw could also have quoted another odd-man-out, Leon Trotsky, who was one of the few on the left to understand the danger that Hitler posed. Writing in a German exile journal in July 1933, Trotsky called "the unparalleled defeat of the German proletariat the most important event in modern history since the assumption of power by the Russian proletariat."

In describing the first four years of Hitler's rule, Kershaw does not try to deny the many Nazi successes that made Hitler arguably the most popular leader in the world. His triumphs were based on the general consensus that all had to act in his spirit. This was all the more important as Hitler did not really lead. What he did so effectively was to allow his underlings to vie for his favor. As Kershaw explains, "in the Darwinist jungle of the Third Reich, the way to power and advancement was through anticipating the 'Führer will,' and, without waiting for directives, taking initiatives to promote what were presumed to be Hitler's aims and wishes."

Yet, as Kershaw also shows in a somewhat contradictory manner, things were far from perfect between 1933 and 1936. Corruption in high party circles had become well known; real wages were falling; living conditions among the lower classes did not improve; and the economy was kept going only by preparation for war. There was a lot of popular grumbling, though not against Hitler, but against others in the leadership. The trouble is that we really do not know how things were in those years, and what the public mood was like. Some historians point to the soaring marriage and birth rates, and the precipitous decline in suicides, under Hitler's rule; and they adduce also the real social and technological achievements of the Nazi regime. Others emphasize that all the improvements were built on quicksand—as they were, incidentally, almost everywhere else in that period, including the United States.

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But did Hitler's terror not compromise Hitler's image as Germany's Messiah? Kershaw points to the widespread belief that the truth about Nazi abuses was kept secret from the good Führer. In any case, the victims of Nazi terror belonged to marginalized social groups, such as communist and socialist leaders, a few maverick conservatives and Catholics, Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, beggars, "antisocials," the work-shy, and habitual criminals. Other Germans thrived on the knowledge of their privileged status.

Some of the most important Hitler biographers, such as Joachim Fest, argue that Hitler accomplished wonders for his people before the outbreak of World War II. Fest asserted in 1973 that, had Hitler been assassinated at the end of 1938, "few [Germans] would hesitate to name him as one of the greatest statesmen of Germany, perhaps even the fulfiller of her destiny." As John Lukacs points out, this argument was not necessarily exculpatory, because it only stated what later German generations might have thought of the Führer, and because it separated the pre-1938 Hitler from the wartime Hitler. Other historians speak of Hitler as a great leader, if only in a negative sense: great in the way that Attila and Genghis Khan were great.

Kershaw wisely avoids the controversy about Hitler's "greatness," and warns that even the argument for his negative greatness is potentially apologetic. Instead, he points to the highly personalized power that Hitler exercised, nearly destroying civilization in the process. One must agree with Kershaw that Hitler's dictatorship was "a paradigm for the twentieth century," reflecting, among other things, "the total claim of the modern state" on the individual, "unforeseen levels of state repression," the absolute manipulation of the media, and "unprecedented cynicism in international relations ... alongside the perverted usage of modern technology and 'social engineering.'"

About certain important historical verdicts, then, the jury is still out. Was Hitler an extreme but not uncharacteristic product of modern civilization, or was he an aberration? In view of the analogous destruction wrought by the likes of Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, one is sadly inclined to conclude that he was typical of our awful times.

ISTVAN DEAK is Seth Low Professor of History at Columbia University.

Beauty and Certainty

BY JAROSLAW ANDERS

Road-Side Dog
by Czeslaw Milosz
translated by the author and Robert Hass

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 208 pp., $22)

Nobody tells the story of this age better than Czeslaw Milosz, the master of eccentric vision. He was born in 1911, and he has seen it all: genocidal wars, revolutions, whole countries violently erased or slowly fading from the maps, the rise and ebb of ideologies, philosophies, religions. Growing up between the two world wars in the Lithuanian city of Vilnius, with its Polish and Lithuanian nationalisms and the long shadow of Soviet expansionism, Milosz joined a group of Marxist-leaning "catastrophist" poets. Their visions of mass terror and annihilation, taken by their elders for a literary pose, were soon surpassed by reality. Later, in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, he published in clandestine literary periodicals, and translated Jacques Maritain's *A travers le désastre*, Shakespeare, and Eliot. (His Polish version of "The Waste Land" is still unmatched.)

After the war, Milosz spent his days in the diplomatic service of communist Poland, but devoted his nights to a series of poems called "Daylight." Their mixture of moral seriousness and ironic distance became for Polish poets the standard idiom of dignity, a form of aesthetic resistance against the stream of official lies. One of the poems from this series, "You Who Have Wronged," written in Washington in 1950, was later selected by Solidarity for an inscription on the monument to Gdansk shipyard workers killed during the protests of 1970. Its classical form—in Polish it consists of two eleven-syllable quatrains, a tercet, and a couplet, linked by an intricate rhyming pattern—underscores its chilling message:

> Do not feel safe. The poet remembers.
> You kill one, but another is born
> The words are written down, the dead,
> the date.
>
> And you'd have done better with a
> morning dawn
> A rope, and a branch bowed beneath
> your weight.

After breaking with the communists and emigrating to France in 1951, where he was accepted neither by the "progressive" French intellectuals nor by the conservative Polish émigrés, Milosz survived in monastic poverty, and worked on his best-known book of prose, *The Captive Mind*, a study of intellectual acquiescence in communism. In 1961 he moved to California, where he accepted the professorship in Slavic Literatures at the University of California in Berkeley, and watched with curiosity the inanity of American consumerism and the budding youth counter-culture. But there, too, he remained faithful to the "estate of Polish literature," claiming (a little exaggeratedly) that "communing outside a shared language, a shared history" is impossible. A lifelong nomad and a perpetual stranger, Milosz seems addicted to looking at things from unordinary perspectives. A Nobel laureate much celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic, he still prefers to keep himself off balance by shuttling between Berkeley and Krakow.

He has written about all this, with eloquence and force, in his essays, but also, indirectly, in his wonderfully condensed, intricate poems. Now, "in his ninth decade," as he reminds his readers, he offers a book that at first encounter seems an invitation to revisit the remembered landscapes of his life. "I went on a journey in order to acquaint myself with my province, in a two-horse wagon with a lot of fodder and a tin bucket rattling in the back," he writes in the opening passage of *Road-Side Dog*. "It was so interesting to be moving, to give the horses their rein, and wait until, in the next valley, a village slowly appeared, or a park with the white spot of a manor in it. And always we were barked at by a dog, assiduous in its duty. That was the beginning of the century; this is its end."

But Milosz's new volume will disappoint those who expect large historical vistas, who come to it for an intellectual distillation of the century, or even just a nostalgic journey into the past. *Road-Side Dog* is a book of fragments, snippets even, greatly diverse in form and in subject. It contains maxims, anecdotes, meditations, crumbs of worldly wisdom, introspections, shreds of theological and philosophical argument

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poems. Some of these morsels are perfectly finished, self-contained miniature tracts, in the mode of the French pensée; others appear sketchy, tentative, even commonplace: assertions in search of proof, thoughts that should become essays, plot lines that need to be tested in a novel. Is this the writer's scrap-book offered generously—but also a little self-indulgently—to his readers, the literary equivalent of a rummage sale? What can a writer of such power and such accomplishment as Milosz tell us in such apparently fractured, ephemeral form? As one reads on, these reservations do not disappear, and yet the book is delightful in its own way. It is touching in its occasional roughness, and it provides a more casual survey of themes, images, and concepts with which the writer has been absorbed throughout his life.

Although Milosz declares himself an enemy of vain and pointless "literatures of confession," and his poetic self is usually that of an external, ironic observer, some of his most moving meditations in the book refer—discreetly, indirectly—to his personal experience of growing old. This happens also to be the theme of his most recent book of poetry, *Facing the River*, which appeared in 1995. In the long poem called "Capri," "a rejoicing and banqueting humanity" invites the speaker "to take part in the festivity of incessant renewal," but voices from his Lithuanian past demand a closing of accounts, and call him back to the point of his departure, which may be also the point of conclusion. In *Road-Side Dog*, this tug between gravity and lightness is voiced in a lucid prose haiku: "Weakness of old age yet in my dreams wanderings in the mountains without effort, as in the poem by Po Chü-i, in which he, an old man, suddenly transformed in a dream, walks effortlessly with his stick." Later he adds, in an even more mystical tone: "Again I was flying in my dream. As if my old body contained, prior to live beings, the possibility of all movements, flying, swimming, crawling, running."

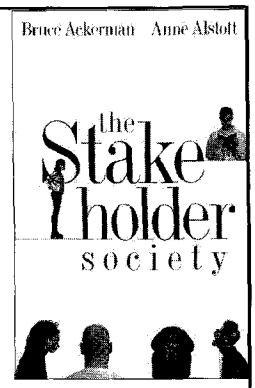
We are soon reminded, however, that what we are hearing is not self-pity, but the reflection of a poet trying to sum up his past "taken as no more than a commentary to a couple of poems." In this stock-taking, the physical and the sensual must not be omitted, because they exist in a symbiotic and sometimes embarrassing relationship with the spiritual: "Poetry cannot be separated from awareness of our body. It soars above it, immaterial and at the same time captive, and is a reason for our uneasiness, for it pretends to belong to a separate zone, of spirit."

The double status of poetry, which seems to belong to the realm of the spiritual and to the realm of the material, is one of the recurrent motifs of Milosz's book. He regards the act of writing poetry as a dubious occupation—a constant effort of the soul to overreach itself. The poet, and the artist more generally, is someone flawed, not completely adult, "not healthy, even if we confess it with difficulty." The luminosity of poetry, its "clear, solid, concise, nearly classical" quality, has, in his view, a dark and dangerous source; it issues from "sorrow, grief, self-reproach, regret, shame, anxiety, desperation." This darker shadow of poetry, warns Milosz, should be treated with respect, never denied or hidden too deeply under the mask of overconfident form, lest the poet bring upon himself "the vengeance of the spinners of Fate."

Those who are familiar with Milosz's reverence for historical memory—his almost antiquarian love of the old names, places, and obscure facts and references with which he fills many of his poems—will be surprised to read in a fragment called "Alexandria" that there may already be too much memory in the world. We live in an epoch, he remarks, "which is unable to forget anything." "Museums, libraries, photographs, reproductions, film archives. And amid that abundance individuals who do not realize that around them an omnipresent memory hovers and besieges, attacks their tiny consciousness." In an age when everything is mechanically recorded and instantly available, memory becomes unstructured, haphazard, and eventually insignificant. Experience becomes an exercise in cross-referencing, a text engendered by endless other texts.

In another fragment, called "Archeology," multitudes of past generations and cultures, swarms of departed souls, "move in unreal space, incessantly astonished by the rites, manners, and appearance of their successors, just as we would have been astonished if we'd been able to meet them." History, especially when it is considered in such extreme condensation, in a foreshortened millennial perspective, offends us with meaninglessness. Its lack of scheme or direction demands rectification, calls for a meaning. "Something must correspond to something, something must result from something. Perhaps so that things just plain stupid and dishonest find an explanation."

Marxism, says Milosz, was just such an act of "inserting meaning" into history, and more specifically into the history of the nineteenth century—an effort that most unfortunately spilled into the twentieth century. And "inserting the meaning" into history is also the essence of



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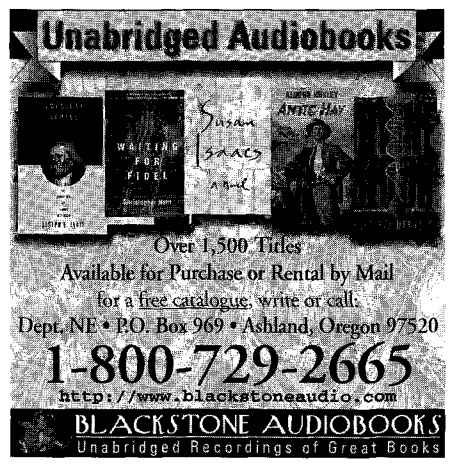
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utopian thinking, which is always more about the onerous present than about the radiant future. That is why Utopia is likely to remain a permanent feature of our imagined world. For Milosz, therefore, the present time, marked as it is by a conspicuous lack of theories of historical meaning, is exceptional and rather unsettling. Who knows what utopias wait around the corner?

The question of meaning—not only in history, but also in art, literature, and religion—is at the center of the question of modernity, which has preoccupied Milosz almost since the beginning. One of his most significant poems, "Treatise on Poetry," unfortunately known in English only in fragments, is a kind of versified history of the modern sensibility, from the decadence and dandyism of the turn of the century, through the spiritual and moral devastation of both great wars, to the final prostration of the thinking classes before the Spirit of History. In *Road-Side Dog*, especially in the longer fragment called "Discreet Charm of Nihilism," Milosz writes similarly about two fundamental premises of Modernity.

The first baleful premise is the "scientific paradigm," or Blake's "Baconian succession," that has reduced the universe to "mathematical necessity." The second baleful premise is Nietzsche's proclamation that "there is no true world," which has undermined our trust in the objective reality and the stability of our values. After such a pronouncement, Milosz suggests, the question "what" has lost its meaning in both ethics and aesthetics, and has been replaced by a ceaseless "how." We have become "indifferent to content and react, not even to form, but to technique, to technical efficiency itself." Taken together, these claims created a world that Milosz considers hostile to spiritual aspirations. In one of the little fictional narratives in *Road-Side Dog*, even Darwin ponders the metaphysical consequences of the modern pattern of ideas, and is forced to conclude that the "theology that can be drawn from it is nothing but that of the devil's chaplain."

CZESLAW MILOSZ BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The heart of the problem, Milosz seems to believe, is not the substance of such ideas, but their democratization in our times: the phenomenon that may be called trickle-down nihilism. "First, a fringe of the aristocracy cultivating literature and art, elegant, freed from the coarser superstitions. And churches filled with the pious, the scent of their incense and their prayers. They would come to a common frame of mind. It would take a hundred and fifty years." This, according to Milosz, is exactly the situation in which we find ourselves today. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was an act of courage to pronounce the relativity of values and the illusory character of "objective" reality. Now it takes courage to dissent from those views.

Milosz seems to follow a rather conventional line in the criticism of modernity. Worse, it is not especially accurate. Outside university seminars, radical nihilism is hardly the orthodoxy of the day. Churches in the Western world may no longer be full of the pious, but they are not exactly empty. If popular culture is any indication, we still prefer to see virtue rewarded and vice punished. Most members of modern societies, instead of wallowing in aristocratic decadence, work sixty hours a week, worry about their children's tuition, and live by the same unreflective, cautious, pragmatic moral code that has been typical of the toiling classes in all eras. The invention of the "crisis of modernity"—the radical division between "then" and "now"—is in itself a modernist fallacy, and a confusion of the history of ideas with history as such.

Pre-modern societies, Milosz continues, derived their strength from the religious outlook that provided man with the sense of a special place, and a special responsibility, in the order of things. What troubles the Polish poet, however, is less the dissipation of the idea of God than the disappearance of the familiar images associated with religious systems. The pre-modern world was rooted not only, or not primarily, in theological doctrine, but in an iconography that organized the outer life and the inner life. If there was a "modern cataclysm," then, it happened mainly in the realm of imagination. "What has been lost," Milosz asserts, is the "vertical axis" that "rules everywhere in the noncorporeal" and "allows for a movement up to better incarnations, or down to inferior incarnations." Put differently, the spiritual destructiveness of the "scientific worldview," which Milosz seems to understand in purely naturalistic terms, consists in undermining the old anthropocentric representation of the world and replacing it with inhuman, nihilistic imagery.

Milosz's own writing, especially his poetry, may be viewed as an attempt to counter this destruction by reclaiming the "innocent" ability to wonder and to trust. One of the best examples is his early cycle of short poems "The World," written during the war, in which, by recreating the bucolic world of a child, he tries to restore a sacred kingdom in which "Faith is in you whenever you look/At a dewdrop or a floating leaf/And know that they are because they have to be," and "Hope is with you when you believe/The earth is not a dream but living flesh." In this sense, Milosz is right to call his work "essentially religious." "Instead of leaving to theologians their worries," he observes in *Road-*

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Side Dog,

> I have constantly meditated on religion.... In my lifetime Heaven and Hell disappeared, the belief in life after death was considerably weakened, the borderline between man and animals, once so clear, ceased to be obvious under the impact of the theory of evolution, the notion of absolute truth lost its supreme position, history directed by Providence started to look like a field of battle between blind forces. After two thousand years in which a huge edifice of creeds and dogmas has been erected, from Origen and Saint Augustine to Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal Newman, when every work of the human mind and of human hands was created within a system of reference, the age of homelessness has dawned.

Again, a skeptic may object that in all likelihood a vast majority of people of all ages have lived in much more humble spiritual homes than those envisioned by Milosz. How, really, can we be sure about the real "contents of their imagination?" Besides, it takes a high degree of spiritual awareness to feel spiritually "homeless" in these times or in any times.

Still, Milosz has no doubt about the need to reconstruct the old "edifice of creeds," or at least some hospitable spiritual space. This need has its root, he says, in our stubborn and seemingly illogical disagreement with the natural parameters of existence: suffering, death, injustice. "An atheist should accept the world as it is," he writes. "But then whence comes our protest, our scream: 'No!' Precisely this excludes us from Nature, determines our incomprehensible oddity, makes us a lonely species. Here, in a moral protest against the order of the world, in our asking ourselves where this scream of horror comes from, the defense of the peculiar place of man begins." And elsewhere in the book he remarks: "To recognize the world as ordinary is beyond my strength. For me it is magnificent and horrible, impossible to bear. Everything indicates that either it was created by the devil or, as it is now, is the result of a primordial catastrophe. In the second case, the death on the cross of a divine Redeemer acquires full meaning."

The poet's Manichean and gnostic inclinations are familiar to readers of *The Land of Ulro* (1977), a book of essays that discusses European mystical writers of the nineteenth century, notably Blake and Swedenborg, and also the Polish Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz. In *Road-Side Dog*, too, Milosz wanders comfortably and freely among religious concepts and beliefs. He tries to breach the gap dividing consciousness and nature. ("The mind would have been without grace had it not been anchored in matter: slaughterhouses, hospitals, cemeter-

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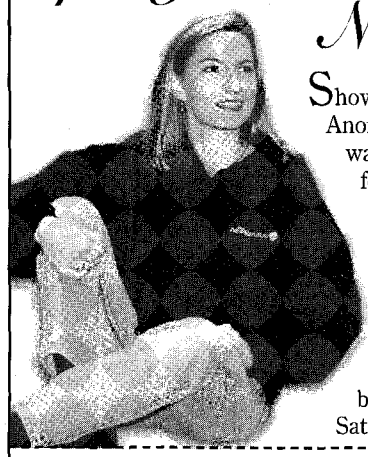

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ies, pornographic films.") He looks for systems in which the physical does not exhaust the possibility of Being, in which there is not nothing after death, in which human deeds are "imperishable" and good and evil have objective meaning.

Milosz is clearly attracted to the austere abstraction of Buddhism. He dreams about a possible change within the "scientific paradigm" that would permit man to return to a more humane and humanist vision of the universe. He even quotes with curiosity a semi-scientific cosmological theory in which the universe appears as a sort of game board, an experiment, or a simulation run by some superior beings. This view, as Milosz half-seriously remarks, would vindicate the polytheistic religions of antiquity, proving that the Greeks "had an intuitive grasp of the distance separating our will from a higher sort of calculation, indifferent to our desires and laments."

As if by an irresistible gravity of tradition, however, Milosz always returns to the Roman Catholicism of his upbringing. "I am grateful for that day," he writes, "when in a wooden little church between huge oaks I was admitted to the Roman Catholic Church. As well as for my long life, so that, believing or not believing, I could meditate on two thousand years of my history. That history was diabolic, no less then heavenly." His quarrel with Catholicism seems to be political and temperamental rather than doctrinal. "I did not call myself a Catholic," he wrote in *Native Realm*, his autobiography, "because the word had such a definite political coloring in Poland. Besides, it would have been false if applied to me, considering my untamed, biological individualism. Nonetheless, I had brought from high school a knowledge of the abysses which, after all, would have to be fathomed sometime."

But apart from that, Catholicism and its two millennia of not-entirely-spiritual magisterium, its elaborate theological and philosophical dogma, remains for Milosz a valid framework for the exploration of his "doubts, turmoil, and despair." It also offers something like a second line of defense. For those who have been denied the grace of faith, it proposes Pascal's wager, or the agnostic's road to salvation.

Indeed, despite its medieval trappings and its elaborate doctrines, the Roman Church has become a surprisingly welcoming sanctuary for modern agnostics and religious fellow-travelers. In a fragment called "A Philosopher," Milosz presents an approving portrait of just such a person—an intellectual who describes himself as an "atheist," and who "would not seek in the existence of the universe any signs indicating its first cause." And yet he also cherishes religion as the fullest expression of "splendor and all the dignity of man"—especially religion "in which the opposition between man and the natural order of things was the most marked, in which, therefore, man by liberating himself from that order achieved salvation." Convinced that civilization is in mortal danger, the "philosopher" decides to side, at least in his public statements, with the moral exhortations of the Vatican, or, in his own words, "to be counted among the workers in the Lord's vineyard." A non-believer, perhaps, but certainly not a free-thinker.

On the one side, the "unfathomable depths"; on the other side, a moral ethos, a didactic program that can apparently function even without the element of faith: Milosz's Catholicism seems to be a versatile system. It is perhaps too versatile for those who wish to confront their belief, or their disbelief, unflinchingly, without looking for loopholes and escape clauses whenever the consequences become uncomfortable. Milosz's meditations on religion also seek to show that life without some metaphysical dimension seems almost unthinkable. He is unable, in other words, to imagine a true atheist—an individual who is convinced that the universe with God is even more frightening and absurd than a universe of "mathematical necessity," and for whom the idea of life after death appears grotesque, and any form of religious fervor seems dangerous and insane. This sort of radical atheism always was a minority view, though it has a grandeur of its own, and an old and interesting pedigree. By not giving it a proper hearing, Milosz misses an important part of the puzzle—which is also his puzzle—of the millennia-long wrestle of man with the concept of transcendence.

The essence of reality, the nature of God, the meaning of history: these are the great and fascinating issues that have always occupied a central position in Milosz's work and world. But when they are presented with the rigidity of a revelation, as they often are in *Road-Side Dog*, they cannot but disappoint. Milosz's maxims are rarely something more than "literary" restatements of routine philosophical questions. But the situation improves considerably when the poet returns to the realm of the poetic imagination. *Road-Side Dog* contains regrettably few poems, but the poems that it does

Dirt

My grandmother is washing my mouth
out with soap; half a long century gone
and still she comes at me
with that thick, cruel, yellow bar.
All because of a word I said,
not even said really, only repeated,
but *Open*, she says, *open up!*
her hand clawing at my head.

I know now her life was hard;
she lost three daughters as babies,
then her husband died, too,
leaving young sons, and no money.
She'd stand me in the sink to pee
because there was never room in the toilet.
But, oh, her soap! Might its bitter burning
have been what made me a poet?

The street she lived on was unpaved,
her flat two cramped rooms and a fetid
kitchen where she stalked and caught me.
Dare I admit that after she did it
I never really loved her again?
She lived to a hundred, even then.
All along it was the sadness, the squalor,
but I never, until now, loved her again.

C. K. Williams

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contain are generally more eloquent and more captivating than its arguments. One of these poems is a parable about a primitive tribe which, in between its slaughters and bloody rituals, polishes for generations a piece of granite into a huge, perfectly spherical ball.

> What did it mean to them? The opposite
> Of everything that passes and perishes?
> Of muscles, skin?
> Of leaves crackling in a fire? A lofty
> abstraction
> Stronger than anything because it is not
> alive?

The image of "leaves crackling in the fire" seems like a nostalgic, autumnal metaphor for the passage of time, but when it is read together with the preceding "muscles, skin," it calls forth much darker, more frightening associations. The somber phrase "not alive" that closes the poem seems to negate the upward movement of "lofty abstraction," but it is also an invitation to explore its two possible meanings: dead, or transcending life.

Finally the choice is ours, Milosz says, but we should be cognizant of the larger consequences of the choice: "Those fantasies, those pageants constructed by the human mind above the horror of life. All arts, all myths and philosophies: yet they are not limited to staying in their own lofty zone. For from them, from dreams of the mind, this planet arises, such as we know it, transformed and being transformed by mathematical equations." Are they just dreams, or maybe representations of something else, hidden behind the horizon of our senses? If Milosz knows the answer, he is keeping it to himself. All that he is maintaining here is that the human self, the human mind, and the human soul cannot live solely in the "empirical." Only what is born out of longings, dreams, and visions can constitute the self's true "home."

This is the secret of the connection between poetry and religion: they both create myths out of which reality arises. This lofty claim for the mythopoetic, quasi-religious powers of poetry may sound extravagant today. Fortunately, Milosz's visions can move and delight even readers of a skeptical disposition, as in these lines from "Capri":

> If I accomplished anything, it was when I, a pious boy, chased after disguise of the lost Reality.
>
> After the real presence of divinity in our flesh and blood which are at the same time bread and wine.
>
> Hearing the immense call of the Particular, despite the earthly law that sentences memory to extinction.

JAROSLAW ANDERS is a Polish writer living in Washington, D.C.

TRB *continued from page 6*

a home for them in an intact Yugoslav federation.) He ended the first two wars by selling out the very Serb populations he had inflamed into fighting; little is left of the territorial gains his armies so arrogantly rolled up in Croatia and Bosnia between 1991 and 1995. But no matter. He has remained at the top of the heap in Belgrade.

Until now. The question is whether, in picking this fight with the United States and NATO, Milosevic has finally outsmarted himself—whether he has gone too far in using the Kosovo issue to drum up political support and fatally overestimated his own ability to handle the Americans. Perhaps he really means it when he says that he will never surrender Kosovo under the threat of NATO bombs—much less permit foreign peacekeeping forces to deploy there. Maybe he will lash back by ordering the Bosnian Serbs to attack American and other NATO peacekeepers in Bosnia. Or perhaps he plans to let NATO pound him for a while, posing as the brave avatar of Serbia until the time comes to concede and cut a deal. He could even offer to give most of Kosovo full independence in return for Serbian sovereignty over the northern segment of the province, where most of the Serbian historical monuments are and where his forces have been ferociously ethnically cleansing in recent days. Or maybe the NATO onslaught will turn his army against him and cost him his job.

Meanwhile, it's interesting to reflect on the conclusions he drew from his dealings with Americans over the years. His success at Dayton suggests that he did grasp the pragmatism and opportunism that so often tempers the professed ideals of American foreign policy. Yet he also seems to have failed to see that, precisely because the United States does claim to be guided by ideals in its foreign policy, we can be embarrassed into action. Having told Milosevic repeatedly that he would face American force if he waged war in Kosovo (the first warning was issued by then-President Bush in 1992), and having acted slowly, or not at all, to stop previous ethnic slaughters in Rwanda and Bosnia, the U.S. government simply couldn't abide another such affront to its protestations of morality. What Milosevic ultimately failed to understand about Americans was that, unlike him, we have a sense of shame.

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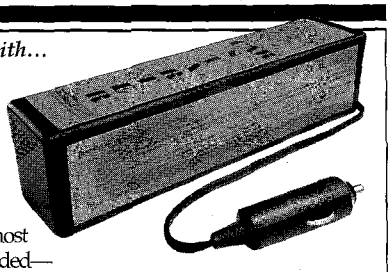

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Loaded

IN FEBRUARY, PHILIP HAMILTON OF the Virginia House of Delegates put forth a modest proposal: the commonwealth should pass legislation banning all firearms from school property. Although many residents probably assumed such a law already existed, it is, in fact, perfectly permissible for Virginia students to keep guns in their vehicles at school, so long as the weapons are not loaded.

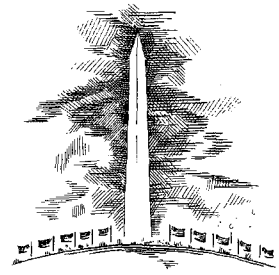
MOST FOLKS—EVEN THOSE WITH the most tenuous grasp of firearm mechanics—recognize that loading a gun is not an especially time-consuming process. If, say, a student were inclined to teach his uppity high school principal a lesson in respect, the extra few seconds required to grab the shells out of his glove compartment and load up the Remington would not dampen his enthusiasm for the hunt.

REALIZING THE ABSURDITY OF THE existing loophole, Hamilton persuaded the House of Delegates to make the bold policy statement "that firearms shouldn't be on school property even if they're unloaded." According to *The Washington Times*: "The Senate was ready to go along with him until Sen. Malfourd 'Bo' Trumbo from Botetourt County reminded downstate senators that the rule would prevent their teenage children from following a time-honored tradition of heading straight from school to a few good hours of hunting. It's a cultural thing, Trumbo said—something lawmakers from urban areas may never understand."

NOW, I HAVE LIVED, FOR VARYING lengths of time, in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Texas. I know what chitlins are and how best to prepare them. I love grits. My high school boyfriend had a gun rack in his pickup. As a teen, I myself had preternaturally big hair. For better or for worse, I am a child of the South. As such, I feel I can speak with some authority when I say that it is almost always a bad idea to take policy advice from a grown man named "Bo." (And the same generally holds true for men called Junior, Squirrel, Bubba, Stinky, or Newt.)

NONETHELESS, MOVED BY TRUMbo's touching reminiscence of his own teenage days in the woods, the Virginia Senate gutted Hamilton's bill, amending it to permit students with hunting licenses to keep guns in their cars—unloaded, of course. (Ultimately, a compromise was reached allowing individual school boards to decide the issue based on each one's "cultural perspective.")

A HUNTING EXEMPTION RAISES ALL kinds of questions about how to distinguish the good guns from the bad, the loaded from the unloaded. (Will students register their hunting licenses with the school office? Will they be asked to display their empty bullet chambers at the front gate?) It also fails to address the issue of what happens when some disgruntled freshman who just flunked his algebra quiz decides to break into a buddy's truck and borrow his deer rifle.



MAKE NO MISTAKE: THIS IS NOT some squishy anti-hunting diatribe. As a Southern woman, I have loved my share of armed men. My high school beau favored duck hunting. In late autumn, he liked nothing better than to rise at the crack of dawn and take his Labrador retriever down to the lake for a little pre-breakfast shoot. My college sweetheart preferred dove hunting, which involved rising at the crack of dawn to go crouch in a wheat field all day. Then there's my father. If it moves and is not registered to vote Republican, Dad will take a shot at it. Ducks, doves, deer, quail, elk, raccoons, boar—you name it, he's stalked it. At the moment, he's having every member of my family made the alligator-skin accessory of her choice from two large reptiles he pulled out of a reservoir near his office. In my father's view, any week without at least one day spent in the woods is a failure. On my visits home, he inevitably tries to lure me into the field with him. Because such adventures require early rising, I usually decline.

I DO, HOWEVER, HAVE MY OWN hunting stories. Though far from a reliable shot, I have blown a handful of God's creatures into the great beyond—the largest being a wild hog I took down with a .44 Magnum carbine. I have, in a rush of adrenaline and blood lust, blasted a nondescript, but shockingly fast-moving, tweety bird out of the air by mistake. (I thought it was a dove.) My fellow hunters and I never located the unlucky creature's remains, but everyone agreed that it was a fantastic shot. In short, I may not live to hunt, but I understand the appeal.

HUNTING IS NOT THE ISSUE HERE. What makes Senator Bo's legislative shenanigans so offensive is that he invoked that most tired and hysteria-producing of rationales: tradition. This country goes soft in the head anytime an issue of "tradition" or "heritage" is raised. We endlessly obsess about our grandfathers, our forefathers, and our Founding Fathers. Perhaps we're overcompensating for our relative youth, our embarrassment at not having existed as a nation even 225 years ago. Perhaps it has something to do with the rootlessness that's come to define our society; families, corporations, ball clubs—nothing stays put for very long, so we cling to any scrap of continuity we can find.

WHATEVER THE CAUSE, it seems you cannot open a newspaper without reading about some protest or crusade being launched in the name of tradition. In South Carolina, nostalgic Southerners are outraged at a proposal to remove the Stars and Bars that currently flies atop the statehouse. Cultural preservation is their battle cry—despite the fact that the flag wasn't hoisted until 1962, as whites were chafing against efforts to dismantle the cherished tradition of segregation. Similarly, the Sons of Confederate Veterans are pushing Tennessee to issue special license plates displaying the Rebel flag. To the north, protests continue at Dartmouth in response to the administration's vow to do away with single-sex fraternities and sororities. At Princeton, students are up in arms over the university's outlawing of the nude Olympics—an annual rite in which sophomores run naked across campus in celebration of the first snowfall.

AT THIS POINT, THOSE WHO DO not want to be crushed by the heritage juggernaut had better climb aboard. Got a favorite ritual, symbol, or institution you want to protect? Dub it a "tradition" and accuse anyone who objects of attacking your cultural identity. I, for instance, have decided it's time to introduce the office to my people's long-standing practice of wearing pajamas to work and leaving early on Fridays. If anyone hassles me, I'll just retrieve my twelve-gauge from the parking garage and try to reason with him. It should only take me a couple of seconds to load.

MICHELLE COTTLE

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